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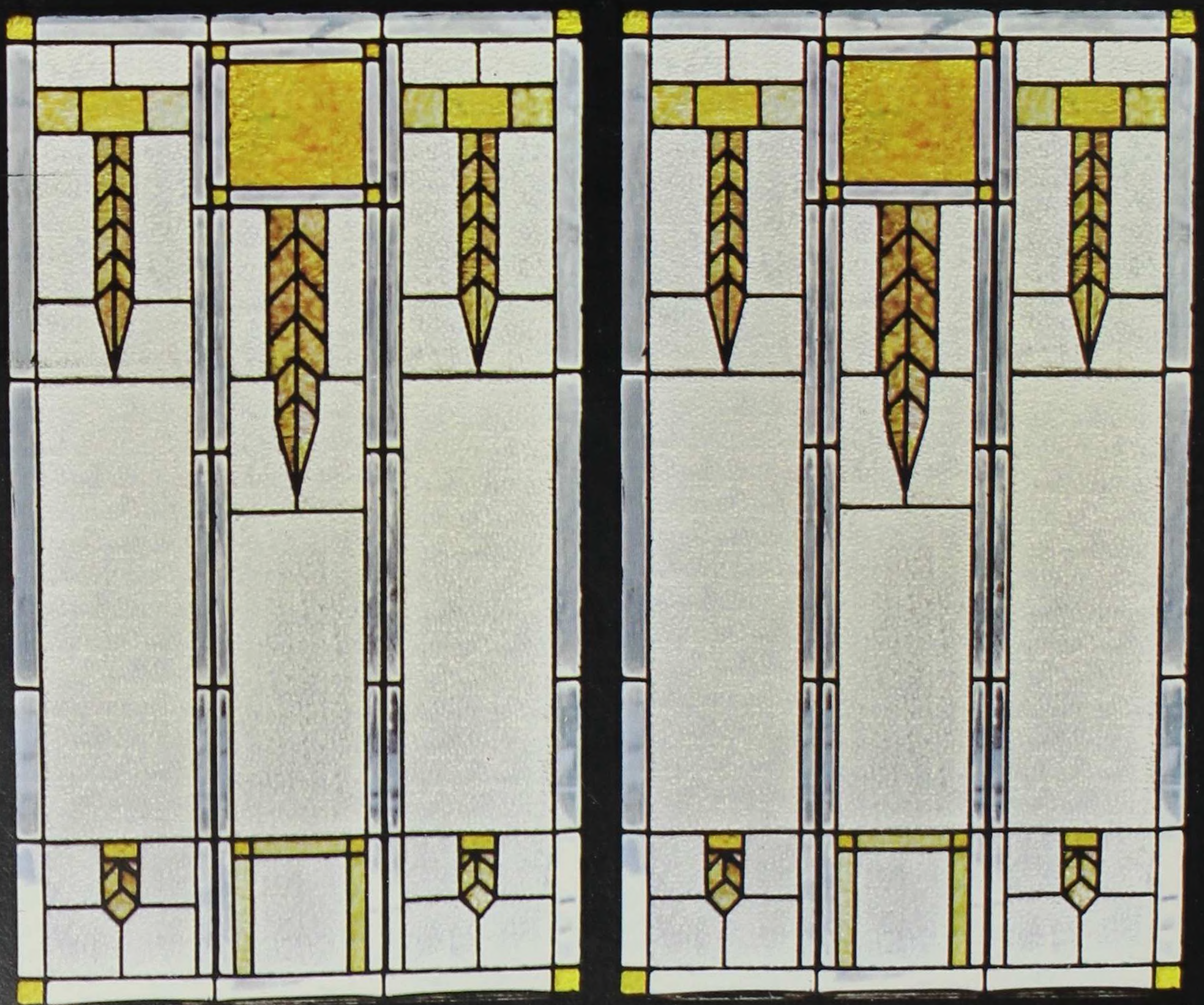
The PALIMPSEST

IOWA'S POPULAR HISTORY MAGAZINE

VOLUME 61 NUMBER 2 MARCH/APRIL 1980



IOWA STATE HISTORICAL DEPARTMENT
DIVISION OF THE STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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The PALIMPSEST

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Peter T. Harstad, Director

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William Silag, Editor

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Cover: *The architecture of Louis Sullivan is hailed as a precursor of modern American building. Some of Sullivan's finest work in the early 20th century occurred in Iowa, including his design for St. Paul's Methodist Church in Cedar Rapids. Two of the church's windows are pictured on the cover of this issue of* The Palimpsest. *Gerald Mansheim's photographs survey the entire Sullivan legacy in Iowa, beginning on page 56.*

The Meaning of the Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete, and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

Images of Victorian Iowa

by

Mary Bennett

Photographs offer unique opportunities to interpret history. In their choice of subjects and in their artistic styles, photographers of the past tell us what mattered most to them and to the society in which they lived. Iowa's Bertha M. Horack Shambaugh (1871-1953) was one such photographer who understood the documentary value of her medium when it was still in its childhood. Much of her camera work of the 1880s and 1890s has survived, and in it she provides fascinating glimpses of life in the Hawkeye State during the Victorian Age.

Young Bertha Horack discovered the camera at a time of enormous change in photographic technology. Previously, picture-taking was limited to a few skilled artisans, to adventurous frontier photographers, and to those who practiced in the local portrait studios. Equipment was cumbersome and required a good deal of preparation. It included a large camera, a tripod to hold it steady, and heavy (yet fragile) glass plate negatives. Before each snap of the shutter, a glass plate was coated with a thin layer of emulsion. This "wet plate" served as the negative for the upcoming photo. Glass negatives required long exposure times and carried high risks of failure, for the slightest movement could destroy the image.

The development of a "dry plate" process in the 1880s eliminated much of the inconvenience in taking pictures. Photographers could now buy prepackaged glass plate negatives, which allowed a faster shutter speed. The "snap shot" made possible by dry plate processes set off a boom in amateur photography in the United States, particularly among the country's middle-income families.

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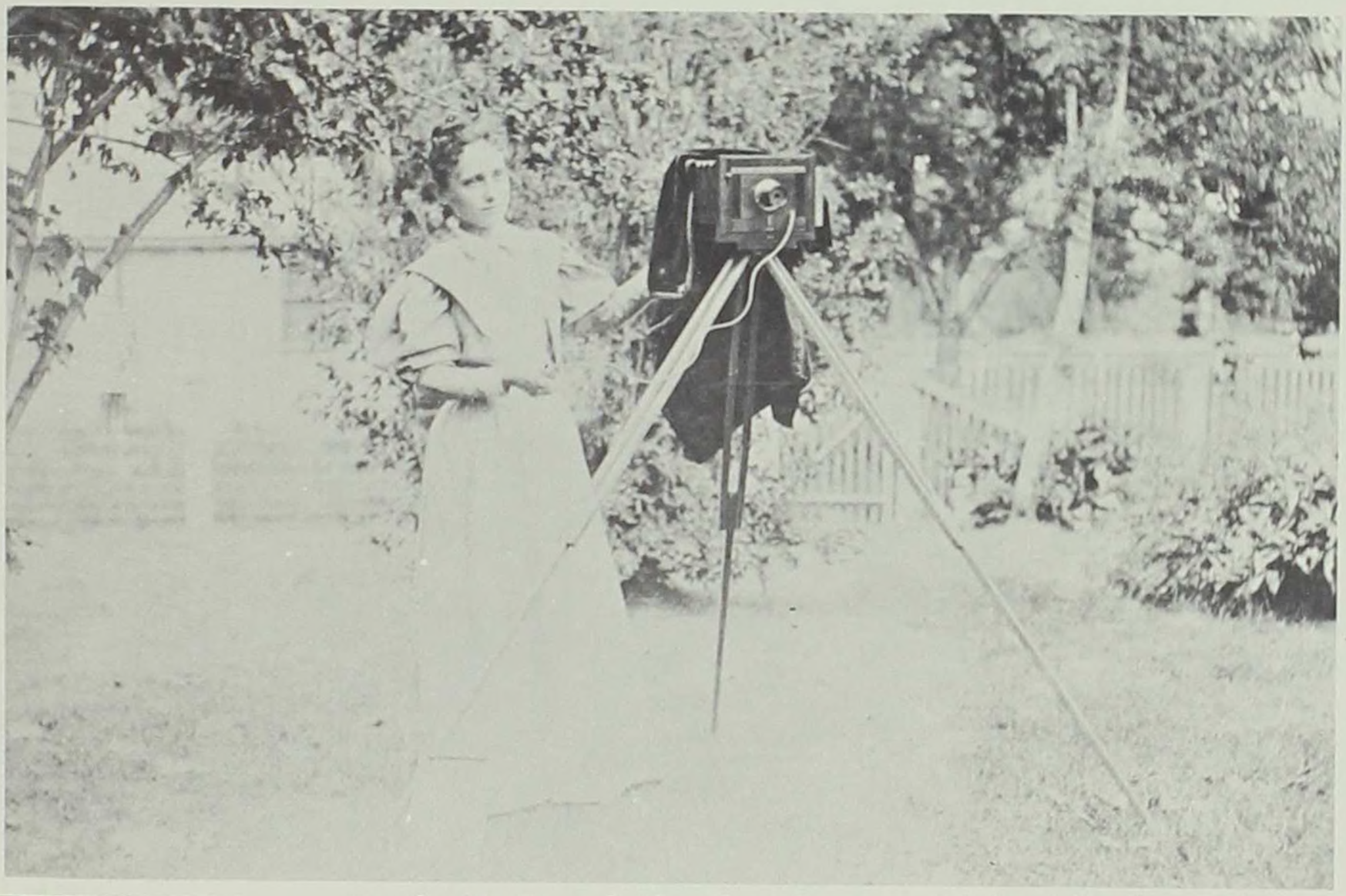


Bertha M. Horack Shambaugh poses with her 5-by-8 tripod camera (courtesy University of Iowa Archives)

Bertha Horack shared this enthusiasm. In 1888, while still in high school, she was given a tripod camera with a single Waterbury lens. She proudly claimed it was "one of the first amateur cameras in Iowa City." It required considerable technical skill and plenty of patience to operate. Long exposure times were necessary to assure good images on the 5-by-8 inch glass negatives she used. Later Bertha replaced this tripod camera equipment with a more convenient hand-held camera, a "folding Eastman Kodak" that used 4-by-5 inch glass plates.

Like most amateur photographers, Bertha Horack recorded significant events and memorable occasions in her life and over the years collected scores of images of her family and friends. Domestic scenes appear often among her photographs. Typical are scenes of her father mowing the lawn, her mother knitting, and her brothers showing off a catch of quail. More illuminating are her pictures of the interior of the Horack home in Iowa City. The contrasting designs of the furnishings and the opulent clutter seen in the rooms say much about Victorian ideas of comfort. The Horack family's affluence is apparent at once, as is their eclectic taste. To the modern viewer, these photographs are valuable representations of middle-class styles in late nineteenth-century Iowa.

Aside from their documentary interest, the interior views provide clues to the photographer's artistic values. Candid shots are rare in Bertha's work, but these compositions are particularly formal. She photographed each room from several different angles, often with glimpses into the room beyond. She appears to have spent time arranging the elements of each composition in order to highlight specific ob-

Bertha's brothers, H. Claude and Frank Horack, return from the hunt (above); (below) brother Frank displays his taxidermy specimens, ca. 1893.

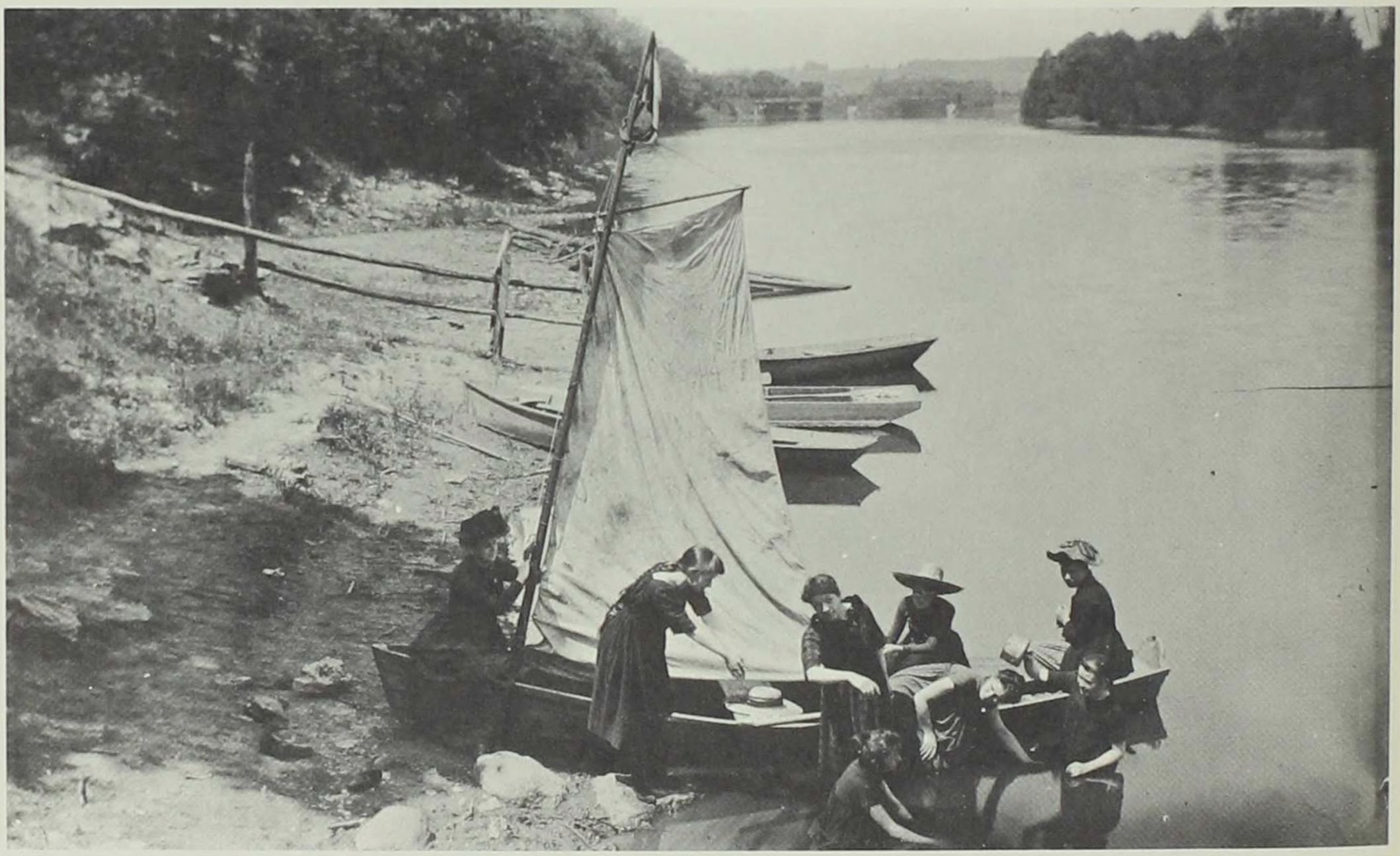
Mrs. Horack and one of her sons clean ducks.

jects, as an artist would design a still life. Always attentive to the lighting, Bertha was especially successful in catching the sun as it filtered through lacy parlor curtains. Thus many of her interiors have a warmth that their formality would otherwise deny them.

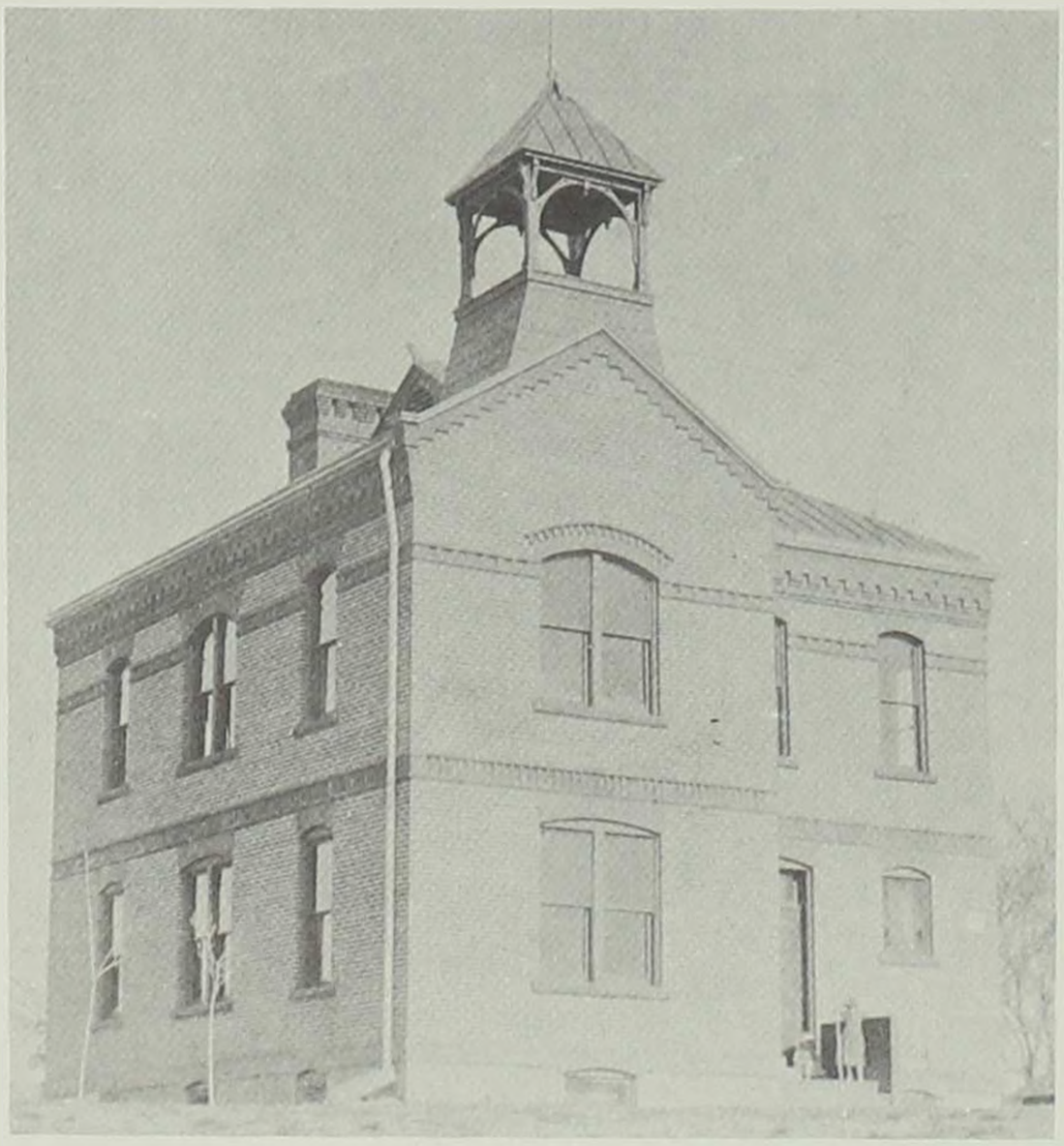
Beginning in the 1890s, Bertha's photographs documented activities around her community as well as those within the Horack family. Buildings, landmarks, and prominent people became subjects of her camera's roving eye. A picture series completed in 1893 recorded interiors and exteriors of many Iowa City schools. Such local scenes as the Johnson County Fair, the Firemen's Parade, Terrell's Mill, and University of Iowa campus life also appear in work done during this period.

Perhaps the best known photographs are those she took in the Amana Colonies in 1890 and 1891 (see *The Palimpsest*, March/April 1977); they include images of people, meeting houses, and other community buildings. The photo collection is an important source of information for historians of the Amanas, as are Bertha's books, *Amana: The Community of True Inspiration* (1908) and *Amana That Was and Amana That Is* (1932). She admitted that while "some of the Amana pictures are good, some [are] indifferent." What was more important to her as a documentary photographer was that "they are all glimpses of the Old Amana that is fast disappearing."

Photography was still a new artistic form when Bertha took it up, but the appearance of flexible roll film in the 1890s encouraged even more amateurs to try their hand with the medium. As the number of photographers increased and more photos were processed at local drugstores, the uniqueness of Bertha's early camera was lost. After her marriage to Benjamin Shambaugh in 1897, she set aside



(Above) Bertha's sorority sisters boating on the Iowa River, ca. 1891; (below, left) Iowa City's Shimek School, 1892; (below, right) sixth-grade classroom at the Second Ward School near Iowa City, 1892.



The sitting room at the Horack house, ca. 1889.

The Horacks' parlor, ca. 1888.

(Above) Bertha's husband, Benjamin Shambaugh, ca. 1892; (below) Bertha posing elegantly in her new home, November 1904, photographer unknown.

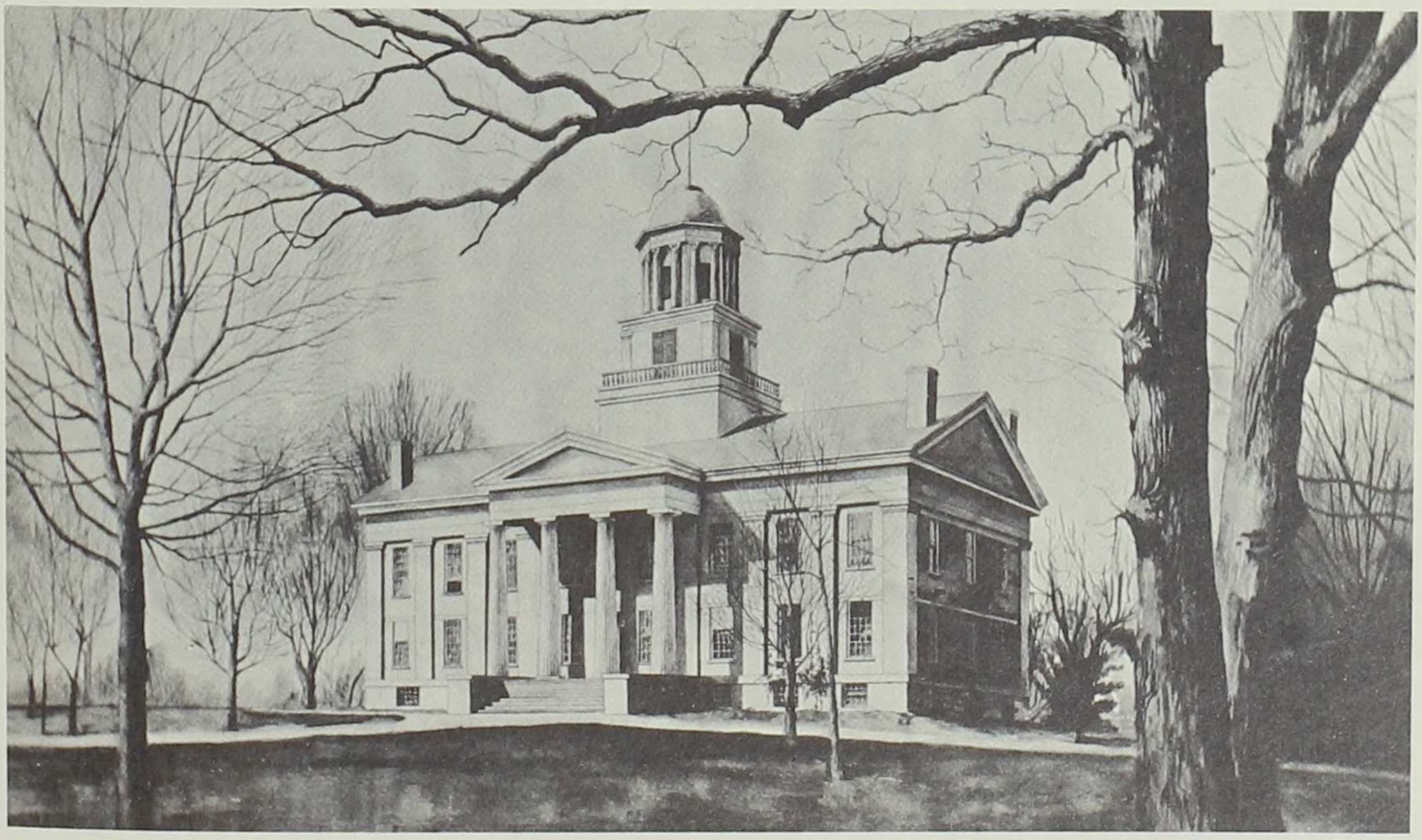
her equipment and hired others to do her photographic work. From then on, most of her artistic energy found expression in pen-and-ink sketches and paintings in watercolor and oil. Old photos, particularly those depicting historical landmarks, often served as models for her paintings and drawings, many of which appeared in local and state publications.

Bertha M. Horack Shambaugh's decision to abandon serious photography is unfortunate. Her photos of the 1880s and 1890s are marked by a high quality unusual in amateur work done during the nineteenth century. Most of the pictures are properly exposed to give good contrast and almost all of the images are in sharp focus. Certainly she was among the first amateur photographers to appreciate the historical and artistic importance of the medium. Bertha revealed her thoughtful attitude toward photography in her special care in handling prints: each was matted, stamped with her name, and dated. Those reproduced on these pages represent a small sample of her achievement as one of Iowa's pioneer historical photographers. □

Note on Sources

The major sources for this article are the Shambaugh Family Papers at the University of Iowa Archives and the Shambaugh Papers at the State Historical Society of Iowa. The two collections contain a total of more than 200 photographs and glass negatives. The author wishes to thank Bertha Shambaugh's niece, Mrs. Katherine Horack Dixon, for her valuable assistance. A more detailed biographical sketch of Mrs. Shambaugh is on file in the Society's Manuscript Department. Unless otherwise noted, all photos are from the Society's collection.

Bertha's photograph of Old Capitol (above) served as the model for her painting of the building (below).



The Household

CONDUCTED BY
MRS. NELLIE M. RICH

(Bettmann Archive)

EDITED BY ROBERT BURCHFIELD
AND LINDA K. KERBER

Nellie Rich's weekly column "The Household" ran in The Vinton Eagle *for nearly a decade, beginning in 1872. At first glance the column looked like a compilation of recipes and household hints, but its real subject was the changing world of women in the Gilded Age. Like many Iowa women, Mrs. Rich followed the progress of the national women's reform movement. She was more than a passive observer, however, and her columns contributed much to the discussion of feminine roles and responsibilities. Unlike urban feminists such as Susan B. Anthony and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Nellie Rich's vision of women's reform grew directly out of rural and small-town experiences shared by the readers of "The Household." She was an empiricist who spoke honestly and precisely about the position of women in communities like Vinton, where theoretical issues raised by the national movement competed with crying babies, dirty dishes, and demanding husbands for women's attention.*

Rich's genius lay in her ability to make plain the connection between private matters and public policy, so that readers might begin a column on baking cookies and end with a lesson in women's social responsibilities. "The Household's" long life in print suggests that its author's observations found a receptive audience among the housewives of Vinton, few of whom would be considered feminists by their neighbors. Yet perhaps there lies the significance of "The Household," for it established a line of communication between rural women and the national feminist movement. Mrs. Rich appreciated the expectations heaped upon her readers by family and community, knew the burdens of their routine, and understood the constraints imposed upon them by tradition. Having earned their trust, however, she demanded that they confront the political implications of their petty domestic problems. Indeed, Nellie Rich believed that they must do so, for the sake of their children, their country, and their own human dignity.

Nellie Rich was born Ellen Abigail Moore in Vermont in 1843, the fifth of eight children. As a teenager, she moved to Steamboat Rock in Hardin County and later entered the University of Iowa. Completing work for a Master of Arts degree in 1868, Nellie Moore taught mathematics and ancient languages at the university for several years. Here she met her future husband, Joseph W. Rich.

In 1871, Mr. and Mrs. Rich moved to Vinton so that Joseph could take a job as an editor at The Vinton Eagle. *They resided in the Benton County village until 1892, when Mr. Rich became chief librarian of the University of Iowa. Even after the couple's move from Vinton, Nellie Rich remained a public figure. She served on the State Board of Examiners for Schools and Teachers, participated in local women's organizations, and wrote articles for the State Historical Society. She died childless in 1915 and was buried in Iowa City. Her grave is marked "Ellen A. Moore-Rich."*

Nellie Rich's first column appeared in The Vinton Eagle *in early 1872 without author's comment or byline.*

HOW TO COOK A HUSBAND—Perhaps no delicacy for the table is prepared with so much labor and attended with so little success as this dish.

The prime requisite in cooking a husband is to catch him; some women seem to think this the only necessary step; others treat them as the French do mutton or as you would bladders and balloons—blow them up immediately; others serve them up raw with vinegar and gall, a most indigestible dish; while others put them in a family jar and keep them in a constant pickle. Some freeze them at first and either attempt a softening by pounding them as you would steak, or beat them like eggs, or attempt to pull them as one would teeth or molasses

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candy. None of these methods will ever secure a nice, tender savory husband. Here is our recipe. See that he is subjected to frequent and thorough ablutions, but do not pick him as though he were a goose; put in a good stuffing of sweet light bread, butter, oysters, and apples; do not fill him too full, never moisten this dressing with anything save clear, sparkling cold water; if dressing is wet up with brandy and wine it is sure to sour and spoil the whole dish past recovery. Subject the husband to a gentle, though not violent, temperature, keeping it as even as possible. Put on a liberal top dressing of sweet-meats and tulip (two lip) balm, the latter should be used occasionally throughout the entire process. Some imprudently attempt a "basting" during this stage and therein fail. If this prescription is well followed and cautiously observed you will in due time have a most savory and palatable dish, which is nice on all occasions. (January 17, 1872)

Nellie Rich's tongue-in-cheek observations on housework made clear her belief that women were capable of much greater responsibilities than those they were usually granted.

ANY WOMAN who can successfully oversee and execute all the varied and complicated work pertaining to general housekeeping, and with the clock-like precision of which many of them are capable, has sufficient brain power to command an army, run a dozen locomotives, superintend the survey of all the wildlands of America, or convert half the heathen on the continent. Of the latter, however, she has her full share. The home missionary work done by women, among their ignorant domestics, is more than that of all foreign missionaries combined. (April 2, 1873)

Although she hoped that her readers would pursue non-domestic interests according to their talents and inclinations, Nellie Rich admitted that many women were treated no better than "mere machines" designed to perform housework. Still, she insisted that they appreciate the influence they retained.

MERE MACHINES—We often wonder if other women sometimes feel that they are mere machines, destined to revolve so many times per day! destined to accomplish a certain round of work, and in time become useless and worn. And yet, machines though we are, it is better to wear out than to rust out, better that our last days be full of labor and full of meaning than that we distress ourselves and afflict others with an indolent and wearisome old age. Although work may seem at times mechanical, although the flesh grows weary and weak, although lack of appreciation and generous sympathy often causes a heart-pang, still there is so much to live for, so much in this busy world to learn and to do, so much to awaken fond hopes and to recall pleasant memories that one really ought not to feel discouraged.

Machines though we be, we may do work which shall live after us. Though the influence of our lives be silent, and our work seem destitute of meaning, still they have their place and their power in moulding and shaping the destinies of others. However narrow may be the circle in which we move, there are many eyes watching us, and many lives influenced more or less by us. (June 5, 1878)

Housework was necessary, but it was also difficult, time-consuming, and monotonous. Nellie Rich believed that women should have the option of working outside the home for pay, and she hoped that her household hints might help homemakers find time for other worthwhile pursuits.

14,100 PIECES IN ONE BED-QUILT—An industrious woman in Marshall County has immortalized herself by making a Centennial bed-quilt containing 14,100 pieces. We would not in the least detract from the praise due her industry and perseverance but must confess that such immortality is dearly purchased. What is a

(Harper's Weekly, *1873*)

bed-quilt after it is done that a smart, capable woman should stitch her life, both soul and body, into it? Fourteen thousand one hundred and nine pieces! It is enough to callous one's hands to the bone to cut them out; then the matching, planning, contriving, sewing, and no one knows what, and you have only a piece for the outside of a quilt which is equivalent to seven and a half yards of calico at eight cents per yard. Sixty cents! And days, weeks, even months, spent in putting together bits of cloth that when pieced are only worth that. Are there no industries in Marshall County which can give employment to its women? Are there no sick to care for, no children to clothe, and feed and educate, no gardens to cultivate, "no nothing" to do that a woman is compelled, in order to keep herself out of mischief, to sew weeks and months on a piece of patchwork that is trying and vexatious enough to send her to the insane asylum for the rest of her days, and all for sixty cents? (June 21, 1876)

While the Biblical account of creation was used to justify the inferior role of women, Nellie Rich thought the real curse arose from a different myth: when Prometheus brought fire "and all the women were set to cooking." This column argues for control of household money by the woman who ran the house. As she often did, Mrs. Rich here contrasted the woman's position with the freedom that a man could enjoy.

WHY A MAN NEEDS A WIFE—That a man needs a wife is a foregone conclusion. Every writer goes back to the garden of Eden and brings forth the venerable Adam-ites, to parade their virtues or vices as a major premise of all argument. Wherever there are domestic infelicities, poor Eve receives more *appel-* lations indicative of evil than all the titles bestowed upon his Satanic majesty.

Because it pleased the Father to create man male and female, we may conclude that a wife is a necessary part of man's being. Had man comprised in his own nature all the elements, in due proportion, that would tend to render him entirely happy, the creation of another nature would have been superfluous. The necessity of earning his bread by the sweat of his brow is doubtless a blessing, else human bodies would not have been so constituted that exercise is absolutely requisite to health; but the simple fact that man was made dependent upon his own exertions for bread is *no curse at all* compared with the one entailed upon mortals when Prometheus first brought fire from heaven and all the women were set to cooking and stewing to make man's bread more savory. Then ensued an innumerable train of evils, sickness, fevers, delirium, and all ills to which flesh is heir. From that memorable epoch in mythological lore to the present, man has thought that he needed a wife to cook his meals, to boil his shirts, to iron his bosoms.

If household duties are all women are good for, and if man seeks a wife because he wants some one to cook, mend, sweep, wash, iron, scrub, make beds, and raise children, why in all reason does he not court her accordingly? Why not be shown immediately to the pantry to inspect the bread and pastry, or to the kitchen

to scrutinize the corners of the sink and the state of the dish-cloth? Why not call upon the mother for a statement of her daughter's industry, and ask for samples of her patch-work and dress-making? All these domestic virtues are by no means to be despised, and a careful young man will not disregard them; but do the modern young men do their courting in this manner? Quite differently one would suppose; for until she is married the sweet Dulcina has all the attention a maiden's heart could crave: she is taken to all public entertainments, is fed to excess on candies and sweetmeats, is called a dear little duck, and the sweetest creature in all the world—presto! When married and the settling-down process begins she is wonderfully transformed. It takes cash to commence housekeeping, and here domestic infelicities have their origin, and unless both parties are exceedingly discreet there are aching hearts and untimely regrets forever after. . . .

It is a rare thing for a man to go to his wife for every penny he wants for the purchase of farm stock, utensils, nails, clothing, food—aye, tobacco and beer also! Where will you find such a case? May the day come speedily when every woman who has the management of domestic affairs may also have her own purse and a proper share of the yearly income to place in it, that she may have the necessities and comforts so much desired. Men can no more understand the necessities of the pantry and wardrobe than they can Chinese hieroglyphics, and the less they attempt to investigate the soda and spice drawers, the better for them. (March 4, 1874)

Nellie Rich often argued that neither inability nor desire but rather "sheer force of circumstance" kept women working at home. Once she reprinted a news item praising a nursing mother for "making a full hand from daylight till dark on the harvester" and for bearing "a fine, healthy baby every year." Rich was aghast; farmers treated their cows more kindly than they did their wives.

(Harper's Monthly, *1875*)

In one of her most emotional and emphatic columns, she describes divorce cases in Benton County in order to show the impact of exploitation on women. Physically and emotionally destroyed by housework, women were reproached and then abandoned by husbands. According to Nellie Rich, men created and maintained this system of exploitation in order to enhance their own personal freedom.

HARD WORK AND MATERNITY—The *Iowa State Register* says: "Mr. M. and wife bound the entire ninety acres, the wife making a full hand from daylight till dark on the harvester, and nursing a young babe. Yet we suppose some women about towns thought it hard to live, lie in the shade and do nothing, those hot days. And, although this is only a specimen of Mrs. M's work, yet she has time to have a fine, healthy baby every year."

Mrs. M. may be an exception among women; her physical system may endure more than is recorded, yet we much doubt if the necessary secretions for the growth of a healthy child can be supplied by a mother whose entire physical energies are constantly directed to manual labor. It would be well for some women if they performed more labor, both physical and mental; the tone and action of their systems would be healthier; but, while a woman's system is performing the functions of maternity it does seem that the child can not be properly de-

veloped and nourished, the mother meantime making a full hand upon the harvester "from daylight until dark," or performing other labor equivalent thereto. It *may* be well for women to bear children every year, at the same time submitting themselves to such exhausting physical labor. If it is well they are an exception to the general rule in animal economy. No intelligent breeder of fine stock would think of treating his dumb brutes with so little mercy. Is the *human* animal of less consequence than the brute animal? Healthy food for the young can not be secreted by the mother unless her system is preserved in a healthy state, free from over-exertion and excitement. This is a truth recognized by all scientific stock-breeders; yet when we come to the vastly more important question of rearing healthy, robust children it seems to be almost wholly ignored. Experienced buttermakers say, "Don't chase the cows; don't dog them; don't speak cross to them; don't beat them and kick them." And why? For the best possible reason; because, under the influence of fear, by reason of over-exertion or from injury, the system can not perform its functions. But what of women who bear, nurse and rear children? What of them? None of them are dogged from morning until night, are they? None of them are the recipients of cross words and angry looks? None are worried and tired until mind and body yield up the struggle for existence—dust returns to dust, and the mourning husband goes his way seeking whom else he may devour? Ah, no! Such things do not happen in America, the land of freedom and intelligence!

Here are a few cases coming directly under our notice in our own county (human beings are about the same everywhere). Judge ye: a man and wife enter a law office and wish a divorce; have been married eighteen years; commenced life with almost nothing; have now property worth eight or nine thousand dollars. The wife has toiled until she can toil no longer, her mind is becoming shattered and she is fast losing her reason in consequence of bodily infirmities, brought on entirely by hard labor. The husband, generous soul! will give her twenty-seven hundred dollars to go and leave him free! He has no conscience to haunt him—free to marry again and send, ere long, another victim to the Insane Asylum, to be supported by the State. But the woman—oh girls, think of it! What has she in all the world now? No home, no friend, no reason! Poor victim!

Twenty-seven hundred dollars, and a frail, weak body with no mind to guide and direct it! A little handful of current money, and a poor maniac, with her whole nature blighted, and every earthly type of happiness entirely obliterated! This case is not exceptional—we wish it might be, for we like the bright side of pictures.

Here is another, no farther removed than the first. A man comes to inquire how much it will cost to obtain a divorce—his wife is insane and he would be free from her. Was she insane when he married? "No." Was there insanity in the family? "No." Do you know the cause of her derangement? "Wal, I spose she's ben workin' too hard and having children purty fast; that's what folks is sayin,' but I don't want no wife that can't stand more'n that." (October 28, 1874)

Nellie Rich liked to tease the medical profession, particularly about male doctors' prescriptions for "feminine ailments." Here she

pokes fun at the rest cures often recommended for women suffering the strains of overwork.

NERVOUSNESS—Nearly every American family contains some victim of neuralgia. If every such victim could avail himself of the treatment recently applied by an eminent physician it would be very pleasant to submit to medical prescriptions. He puts his patients to bed, forbids their moving, feeds them well five times per day and makes up for the lack of exercise by the use of electricity and by kneading the body. The patient so treated for a month comes forth fat and rosy. We imagine there are not a few people, especially house-keepers, who would not enjoy a month's rest with plenty to eat and no thought with reference to the cooking thereof. Just now when the house-cleaning is over and the fatigue of the labor is upon one, when the hot south wind blows in more dirt in an hour than has with great pains been scrubbed out in a week, it would certainly be a relief to one's nerves to be put to bed, fed and cared for until the poor body is rested and a little of the tan and sallowness have been bleached away. But not women alone are victims of nervousness and neuralgia. Many hard working business men need such a rest, and yet the care and worry of providing for the family forbid even the thought of it. The cares and trials of life often seem very unequally distributed. (May 12, 1880)

Farmers and businessmen in the Vinton area suffered financial hardships in the economic depression that began in 1873. Many of them joined the Anti-Monopoly movement in order to protest the price-gouging of distant middlemen who stood between producers and consumers. Nellie Rich sympathized with the Anti-Monopoly cause but chided its advocates for their failure to enlist the aid of natural allies right in their own community.

CRACKED WHEAT—There is no article of diet more wholesome or more economical. Obtain that which has been cracked by mill stones, not pressed; cook with a slow fire for two and a half or three hours, stirring often to prevent crusting on the bottom of the pan; add sufficient salt to give a good flavor, and pour it out into the molds to cook. Serve cold, with cream and sugar. It is superior to any pudding or pastry ever invented.

NOTE—In almost every town of Iowa where so much wheat is grown and shipped every year, it is difficult to obtain cracked wheat, and what we do get comes from Chicago at the delicate little price of ten cents per pound! The demand for cracked wheat is by no means small, and the supply ought to come from our own mills. This, however, is not the only thing raised in our own dooryards upon which we pay enormous margins—necessarily enormous unless our people will utilize farm products, instead of shipping to distant cities to be slightly changed and then returned to us. Corn is spoiling in open bins all over the state, and finds no purchaser at thirty to forty cents per bushel, while corn starch retails at fifteen to twenty cents per pound; hominy at five cents per pound. Pork and beef are shipped to Chicago and sold at low figures, when our very neighbors cannot obtain a pound of lard made at home, or that brought from a distance at less price than fifteen cents per pound. All hams and dried beef come from the east, done up in yellow linen and sold to the tune of high prices. When farmers and farmers' wives combine to work up their agricultural products so that they will not be perishable, and at the same time more saleable, then we will avoid railroad transportation, increase our own incomes, to the benefit rather than the detriment of others; and, besides, retain on the farm as fertilizers all the refuse which is now shipped to Chicago or St. Louis, to be thrown into the rivers and breed pestilence to the towns, or enrich the soil which these waters inundate. . . .

Farmers sell their products at low prices, and the railroads take them to market. Poor towns-men, with small incomes and many beg-

gars at the gate, pay the railroads for carrying away and returning these products to them again, and eke out a miserable existence on whatever is left after the payment. The country people imagine that the town people get all the profit, and count them as common enemies. Let us think a little further, and notice how most of them manage in order to live, and we will not censure town people so much; but, using good judgment and much care, will learn how to help each other, to the immense benefit of all. (August 20, 1873)

While Nellie Rich praised matrimony and women's household responsibilities, she criticized the idea that all women should marry. In the next column, she unleashes an indignant assault on the belief that women must marry, refutes the notion of a divine eternal order, and propounds her recurrent theme that change was natural.

A caricature from Punch, *1851*

WILL WONDERS NEVER CEASE?—We are not a little surprised to find that any Iowa editor, in this age and generation, should indulge in language like the following, which we clip from the columns of an Iowa paper:

"The inventor of the Bloomer costume, Amelia Bloomer, is said to be living in a quiet village of Iowa, and it is encouraging to learn that in accordance with the 'eternal fitness of things,' an overruling Providence has thus far prevented her from finding a husband."

If our memory serves us right Mrs. Bloomer has a husband. But, even if she had not, what great crime, let us ask, has the woman committed that "in accordance with the 'eternal fitness of things' an overruling Providence has prevented her from finding one?" We had supposed Mrs. Bloomer a highly intelligent and morally upright woman, which she truly is; a woman who at one time found it necessary to adopt a radical style of costume in order, if possible, to improve and strengthen a naturally weak physical constitution. She has been one of the representative women of America. In the face of opposition and ridicule she wore a simple costume which she believed more conducive to health than any other. Had all women of Iowa as much regard for health as for personal appearance our insane asylums would not, as now, be taxed to their utmost capacity. We do not like to see women make guys of themselves. We do not like to see them so dressed that they become the subject of general remark and criticism, but we do like to see them independent enough to wear such articles of dress as they can afford, which are at the same time both becoming and healthful. It is a terrible state of society when editors turn preachers, for divinity is not a prominent feature of their calling, and announce in bold type that, because of a peculiar style of dress, adopted by an intelligent and worthy woman, divine wrath has so been visited upon her that in accordance with the eternal fitness of things an overruling providence has prevented her from finding a husband. Women who are guilty of all the crimes in the catalogue, have husbands. Those who have shattered the ten commandments worse

than Moses did the tables of stone, have husbands. Is there some greater sin than any which is prohibited in Holy Writ? People generally take the Bible as their standard moral code. If there is some greater crime than any of those which God has commanded us to eschew we would suppose it to be that which this woman has committed. No where in the Bible do we find a penalty for sin such as the prevention of legal marriage. No where do we find in the Bible a command that all women should wear long dresses and those who do not shall be doomed to eternal celibacy. Is there a new gospel and a new revelation? (March 10, 1880)

Nellie Rich did "not like to see women make guys of themselves," but preferred practicality to high fashion. She asserted that too many women dressed up in the errant belief that "these fastidious husbands must be gratified," and foolishly followed styles set by people who knew nothing of housework.

WOMEN'S DRESS—Did woman know that in this subject of dress there is involved the most vital principle of the race, she would not be long in espousing the cause of reform. The majority of thinking men fully depreciate extravagance of woman's dress, the ruin which it brings to her whole being, mental, physical and moral, yet desire her to conform to prevailing modes rather than appear hideous by being eccentric. Why could not a sensible and radical change in fashion accomplish the whole thing?

If she was divine yesterday with five pounds of hair streaming down her back, and an angel to-day with a less quantity piled on the top of her head, why may she not be celestial tomorrow with it shingled a pretty length, having her scalp clean, healthy, and free from oils and drugs? If yesterday, to make her the object of masculine affections, she required a hoopskirt, a trail, an overskirt, and basque, all elaborately trimmed; and to-day she is still lovely with her dress a comfortable walking length, no hoops, her over-skirt thrown to the winds, and her basque lengthened to a redingote, with no ruffles; to-morrow, may she not still lay claim to divinity, if she removes all weight from her hips and back, casts her ruffles upon the waters never to return, and shortens her skirts so that they are not "all under her feet" when she attempts to carry a baby up stairs, or expel a thieving dog from the kitchen?

Every season the whole country awaits in breathless anxiety the announcement, by a few leading magazines, of the coming styles. These magazines have depended upon the French emporiums of fashion, and the leading manufacturies for their cue. Now that America has fully freed herself from English thralldom and African slavery, it seems high time that she should no longer pay court to a nation so vacillating as France; that women who are, and are esteemed so much superior to French women should no longer adopt as their mode, and to their final ruin, the furbelows in vogue with and invented by French *abandons*. They dress to please, they live to please, and their life is embodied in the gratification of tastes, impulses, and passions. American women are quite the reverse. . . .

The peasant women of Scotland, Italy and Normandy are robust, athletic and beautiful; the latter can fish all day, and swim a mile without fatigue, while the working women of Germany perform daily more hard, physical labor than the men. The dress of these women is short, loose, and gives opportunity for physical growth and vigor. From all American women, who perform much labor, either mental or physical, the cry ascends, "give us something to wear in which we can work!"

During the entire American Revolution, women toiled, side by side with men, for freedom from English thralldom. During the Civil War for the preservation of the Union, they were ever willing workers for the cause of right. And now these two evils being disposed of, and that within less than a century, must not both men and women see that still another clanking

chain impedes our progress—worse because more insidious than either of the others—our bondage to French fashions, to ridiculous and unhealthy modes of dress. Men lament that so few American children are born, and so many German and Irish children are growing up to usurp their places. When these same men can declaim as loudly in church and hall for the liberal education of women, for simplicity in dress, in food, and in customs of living, as they have freedom of speech, of press, and of the ballot, then may we hope for reform. (January 23, 1878)

Nellie Rich recognized the importance of education if women were to improve their situation, but she scoffed at schools that merely offered a little French, a little music, and some painting lessons. "Do not educate women so that matrimony is necessary in order to ensure their support," she wrote. Women needed practical instruction if they were to enjoy the employment opportunities then open only to men. And even if women chose housekeeping as a vocation, she maintained, an effective parent had to have a decent education. How else could a mother keep the respect of her children as they learned the ways of the world?

A LITTLE LEAVEN—Of late we have been pleased to note the growing interest in study which is manifest among married ladies. This interest seemed to take its first incentive during and near the close of the late civil war and though at first confined to a class, who being made destitute by war were obliged to support themselves, it has so expanded that now it embraces the women of all classes and communities. At the close of the war it was a new feature in school life to see married men and women in the college classes. Now it is a very common thing and we are pleased to note that they are also to be found studying in the normal institutes, in private schools and at their own firesides. Away, and forever, with the idea that

(Culver Pictures)

a married woman can make no progress in study. That we are capable of constant improvement during life is in itself a powerful incentive to study. It is difficult sometimes to make women believe this and to dispossess them of the idea that marriage is an insuperable barrier to education. A married woman can be a student as well as an unmarried, and though she has more care than in youth she is encumbered with less romantic fancies and the dissipation of them is usually a blessing. School girls write essays on the "pleasures of the imagination" and deify their fancies and air-castles in a gushing flow of sentiment, but all this does not materially advance them in culture or in usefulness, but the rather, tends to unfit them for the duties of practical life. We would by no means place every girl in the straight-jacket of practical living and thinking, yet we do say that when she has passed that period in her life when she dreams of gallant knights and "castles in Spain," she is better fitted for study than during her teens. And it is because we believe this that we write so much about studies for married women, and have tried for six years to make this column in some way a benefit to them. By suggesting new and improved ways of doing work; by giving methods for preparing different articles of food, clothing, and fancy work; by making suggestions with reference to health and diet we have tried to lessen household cares that women might find more time for reading and study. We occasionally hear of some one who has been benefited by the suggestions in this column, then we feel that the leaven is still working. Every one can in her own way assist some one to improve, and though we are married women, yet our advancement in culture and knowledge need have no check, and the future should know us as improvements upon our former selves. (August 29, 1877)

All the lectures and essays in the world would not encourage a young girl so much as the

example set by a woman who had traveled a path "new to female feet." Nellie Rich insisted that women should feel capable of doing the same jobs as men. Confronting the common charge that women were against members of their own sex working in public, she blamed husbands for intimidating their wives.

EXAMPLE is everything. It carries with it a silent but powerful influence, which no amount of talking can equal, or gainsay. Many timid women who long for some employment by which they may gain sustenance, are however, productive of much good, very much; and their value should by no means be despised. Many women yield to the harsh ridicule of their husbands, and shrink instinctively from any task which has heretofore been classified as *man's work;* but thanks to the noble nature of many of these sons of men, they rejoice to see their wives and sisters engaging in some occupation which is both pleasing and profitable to them, rather than see them fritter away precious moments in novel-reading, tatting, and silly prittle-prattle.

We do not believe that the men who object to the work which their lady friends desire to do, object out of hard-heartedness or dread of failure; but, lacking really manly courage, they object simply from fear of the remarks which lazy loungers in stores and taverns will inevitably indulge.

What if those lazy, lounging creatures do speak slurringly of strong-minded women?

They speak in worse terms of the best pastors and missionaries the world affords. Their chief delight is to ferret out some scandal relative to some prominent good man, and hurl it in the teeth of the community as a brand upon all Christian characters.

Blessed above all women are those who have pleasant, comfortable homes and happy families, where they spend their days in usefulness, and amid delightful associations! But there are so many homes where the father cannot command an income sufficient for the maintenance of the family; then the helpmate God has given him should, as a duty she owes to her husband and family, rally all her latent forces, and render such aid as circumstances will permit.

There are many women, all over our land, without homes—without any prospect of homes. They are human; they must live; and since they form the best, and often, most substantial portion of society, what right has any person to say they shall not have access to any occupation by which they may earn a respectable livelihood? The want of wholesome, remunerative labor has driven many sweet, lovely women into dens of vice from which escape is impossible.

"The opposition which women meet, in their endeavors to earn a livelihood, comes with more force and piquancy from those of their own sex, rather than from men." This we hear often; but we really cannot believe that any true, noble-hearted, educated woman would refuse to hold up the hands of one laboring for worthy purposes. To be sure, there are what one calls silly women, in the world—every picture needs a background—yet, however numerous they may be, there is certainly no lack of men who are ready to call their fellowmen *dunces*. The inference is natural that the distribution of intellect among the sexes is about equal.

Let no woman be deterred from any good and profitable employment, for which she is fitted, by the fear of ridicule or opposition. If public sentiment in regard to the work of women is wrong, the quiet, persevering labor of those who have courage to take the lead will soon set it right. Your example is worth more to the next generation than all the income you can command. Educate your daughters as well as your sons; give them a trade or profession by which they can earn a living, and it will be a better inheritance for them than gold or lands. Let the example of your lives be good and the results will be good. (May 7, 1873)

Since example was everything, Mrs. Rich praised women who had achieved public prominence. Often her advocacy of new jobs for women went beyond simple economics. In the case of the legal profession, for example, she realized that preventing women from becoming lawyers was another way of excluding them from making the law.

CREDITABLE—The city of Davenport did a very creditable act in electing a lady to the superintendency of its public schools. Miss Phoebe W. Sudlow is the lady, having been laboring in the city schools since the fall of 1859. Genuine merit has advanced her to the head of the school department; and it is to be hoped the board of directors will pay her such wages as the position deserves—as much as they would pay a MAN. (July 1, 1874)

STUDYING LAW—Mrs. Savery, of Des Moines, is a student in the law department of our State University, and Anna Dickinson is pursuing a course of study in the law school at Ann Arbor, Michigan. These two women are known as successful lecturers, the latter especially so, and we trust the study they are now pursuing will enable them to be of great usefulness as educators of their sex. Every educated woman is a blessing to the race. Women have as much brains and as good minds as men. Let them improve their talents. Ignorant and conceited men have always been energetic in keeping women out of our best schools and colleges,

and the stupid creatures are not all dead yet; but the time will come when such men will have to render their account for the deeds done in the body; and that is the time when they will call on the rocks and hills to cover them. Women, to be good wives and mothers, must be good teachers and law makers. If they must abide by the law, they ought to understand its principles and have some voice in its adoption. (December 2, 1874)

Nellie Rich's great gift was her ability to lead readers from familiar household scenes to the larger world of politics. Her political activities predated the formation of the Vinton Women's Suffrage Society in 1875, but the rise of feminism in her own community gave Mrs. Rich a chance to discuss the relationship between women's rights and citizenship in a democracy.

WOMAN'S INFLUENCE IN THE HOME—A woman without education bears the same relation to one of ideas that the rough stone from the quarry bears to the beautifully chiseled statue; the beauty of mind and heart may be there, but the hand of the educator is needed to make it apparent. American women, as a class, are much better educated than those of other countries, and the marked prosperity of the country clearly evinces the fact. In his work on "Democracy in America," M. de Tocqueville says: "I do not hesitate to avow that although the women of the United States are confined within the narrow circle of domestic life, and their situation is in some respects one of extreme dependence, I have nowhere seen women occupying a loftier position, and if I were asked, now that I am drawing to the close of this work, in which I have spoken of so many important things done by Americans, to what the singular prosperity and growing strength of that people ought mainly to be attributed, I would reply to the superiority of their women." Woman's home influence is everywhere recognized, not only by de Tocqueville but by all close students of human nature, as the grand incentive to morality, self-government and national prosperity. No statesman, of whatever nationality, is ready to refute this, but thousands everywhere are constantly repeating it—that woman's high moral and intellectual standing in America is one of the secrets of American prosperity. This capability of American women is due to the advantages offered her for education, and to the position accorded her in society. Exactly in proportion to woman's educational privileges is her influence for good. Make her a citizen in every sense of the word, and government is thereby made stronger and purer; debar her from all privileges of citizenship, and government degenerates to despotism. It is our firm conviction that the granting of suffrage to American women will be one grand step toward cementing more firmly the family tie and awakening women to a knowledge of their true position as educators of the race.

Education in politics, religion, and the known arts and sciences is of vast importance to the wife and mother, and her influence for good depends largely upon her culture in these. Many a woman, whose advantages for scholastic lore have been small, has nevertheless so cultivated her mind by reading and observation that her opinion is sound and valuable. But all women have not the natural ability and the requisite *push* to educate themselves without the aid of schools and churches. If then, we would purify and ennoble mankind, let us educate and elevate woman, for her influence, politics, and morals. (January 13, 1875)

Nellie Rich rejected the tactics of radical suffragists in Eastern states, even after the Iowa Senate defeated a bill recommending a referendum to decide women's suffrage. Indeed, Mrs. Rich feared that the radicals' tactics might have undermined the political gains made by hard-working Iowa women seeking the vote.

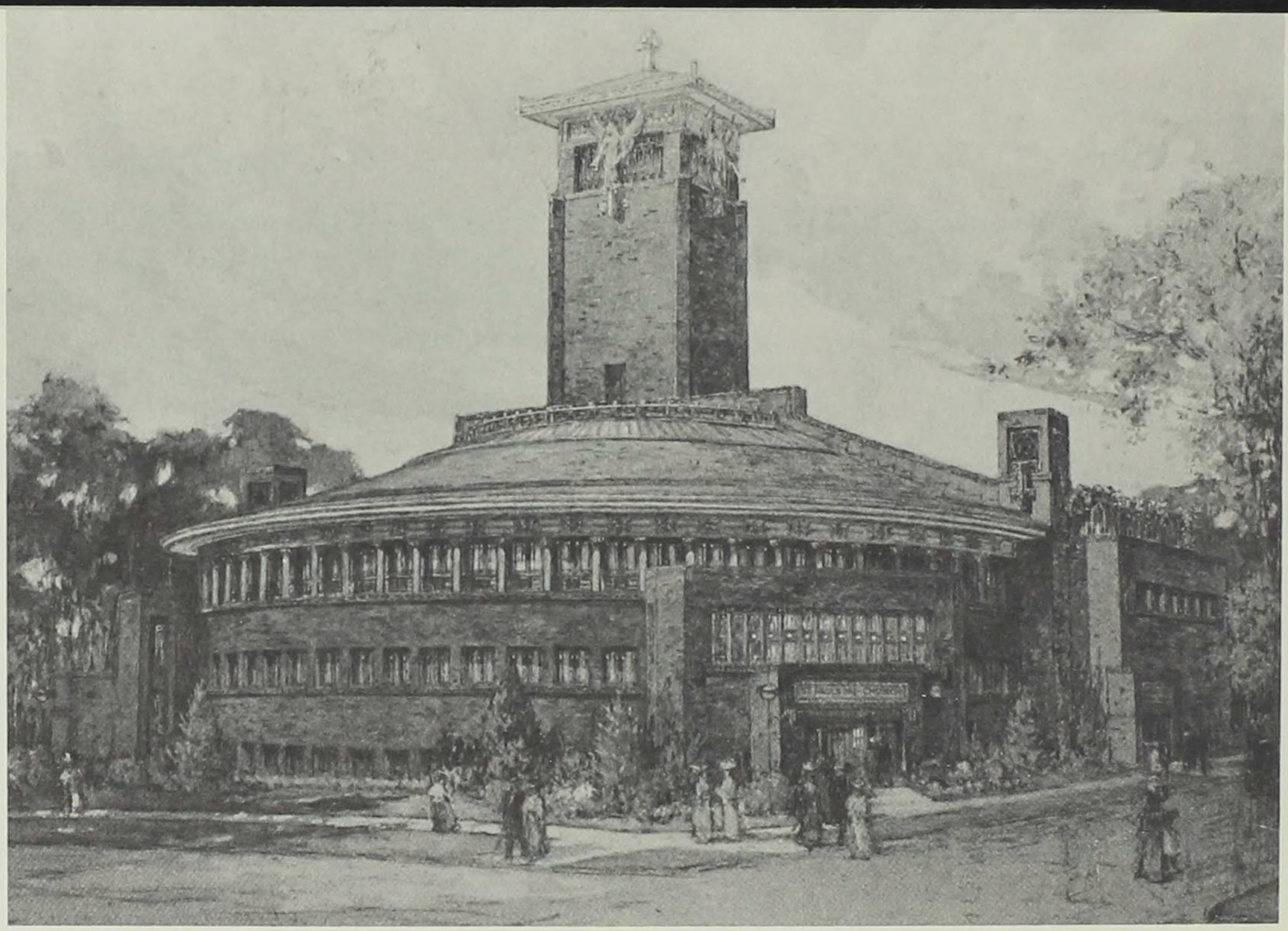
(Harper's Monthly, *1875*)

NOTES—The woman suffrage bill has failed to pass the Senate, so Iowa will not be called to vote upon striking the word "Male" from the constitution this year. We are no prophet, but really believe that the assembly of suffrage advocates, who daily beseiged the legislature in behalf of this measure, did more to defeat it than anything else. The suffrage question was progressing rapidly enough in this State until Eastern women deemed it necessary to send women into Iowa to work up the cause. The women of Iowa, who are adhering closely to their own line of duty, doing with their might whatsoever their hands find to do, are really doing more for suffrage than all the addresses of the traveling woman-suffragists combined. Let women show by their daily walk and conversation, that they are intelligent, industrious, Christian workers for the good of the country, and their influence in behalf of women will be ten-fold greater. Women must be better educated, they must be more thorough Christians, possessed of whole-souled philanthropy, then their way to suffrage and to the highest places of honor and trust will be vouch-safed. Voting is not in itself the greatest of privileges, yet it is clearly the right of an American citizen and would doubtless be accorded to women as a right, if the majority of them were fully in earnest with reference to it, and used as much womanly tact to secure it as they do to secure other desired objects and privileges . . . . (March 15, 1876)

These criticisms of women suffragists are rare. Overall, Rich attempted to forge a broad unity among women with different outlooks and to encourage women's ambitions outside the home.

AMBITIOUS WOMEN—When we hear one woman complain that another is too ambitious, we are always reminded of Brutus and Caesar. Because Caesar was ambitious, Brutus slew him. There is never an animal so small that it has no enemy. There is never a personage so exalted that there is not another to pull him from his throne. So, continually, this deadly conflict wages. It doubtless waged before these noted Romans had existence. It will continue to wage so long as one has what another desires. It would seem that when women, whose ambitions seldom lead them outside home interests occasionally indulge a flight of fancy or attempt a step in advance of the majority, they might enjoy their little effort without any to molest or make afraid. But such is not the record of history; and there is also much unwritten history on this point. The endeavors of more than one woman have been chronicled and the chronicle is not always flattering; neither is it always just. When one suffers opposition, envy, disappointment and defeat, is not that atonement enough for possessing a desire to advance? One would think so. Yet some must even then give a kick to those who are down. From empresses down to seamstresses, there courses through human nature the same evil feeling which actuates one to dislike and speak evil of another, who attempts, however humbly, to place herself higher in the scale of being. . . . If we must bridle ambition let it not be with envy. (August 13, 1879) □

The Vinton Eagle.



LOUIS SULLIVAN IN IOWA

Architect Louis Sullivan came to Iowa late in his career, long after he won recognition as a major innovator in the design of American buildings. The Chicago firm of Adler and Sullivan created headlines in the 1880s for its bold attempts to unite utility and beauty in large structures, among them the Auditorium Building (1886-1889) erected near the city's lakeshore. A series of spectacular successes ensued: St. Louis's Wainwright Building (1890-1891), Chicago's Stock Exchange Building (1893-1894), and Buffalo's Guaranty Building (1894-1895).

At the height of his fame, Sullivan received a commission to design the Transportation Building for the Columbian World Exposition, which opened in Chicago in 1893. Historians consider the Transportation Building the Exposition's single architectural achievement, but its imaginative design was lost amid the neo-classical structures that surrounded it on the fairgrounds. While the public embraced the gleaming Renaissance style adopted by most of the Exposition's architects, Sullivan

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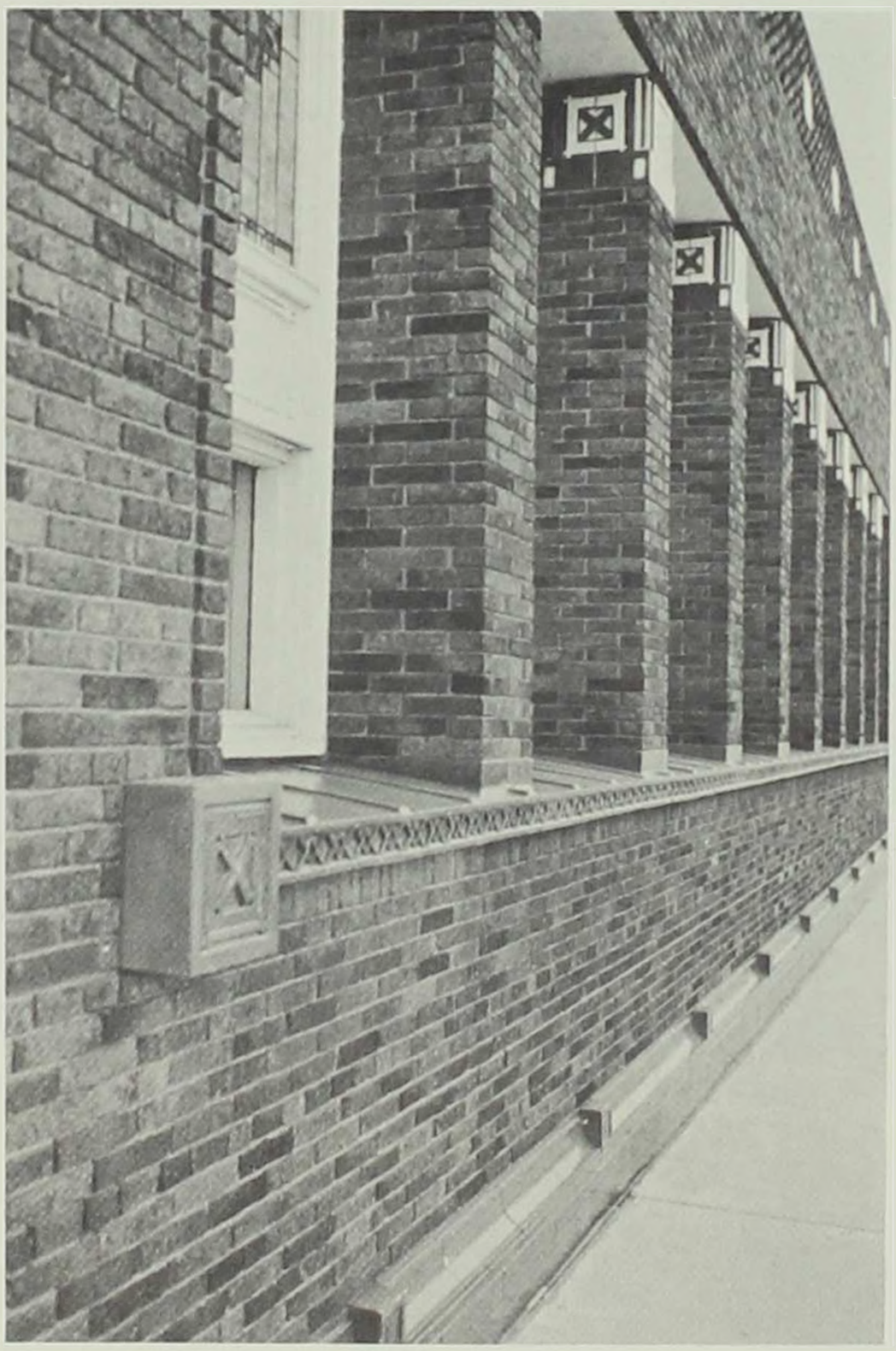
Louis Sullivan's painting of the proposed St. Paul's Methodist Church in Cedar Rapids (left), and the church as it appears today (right).

BY GERALD MANSHEIM

dismissed it as a "lewd exhibit of drooling imbecility and political debauchery."

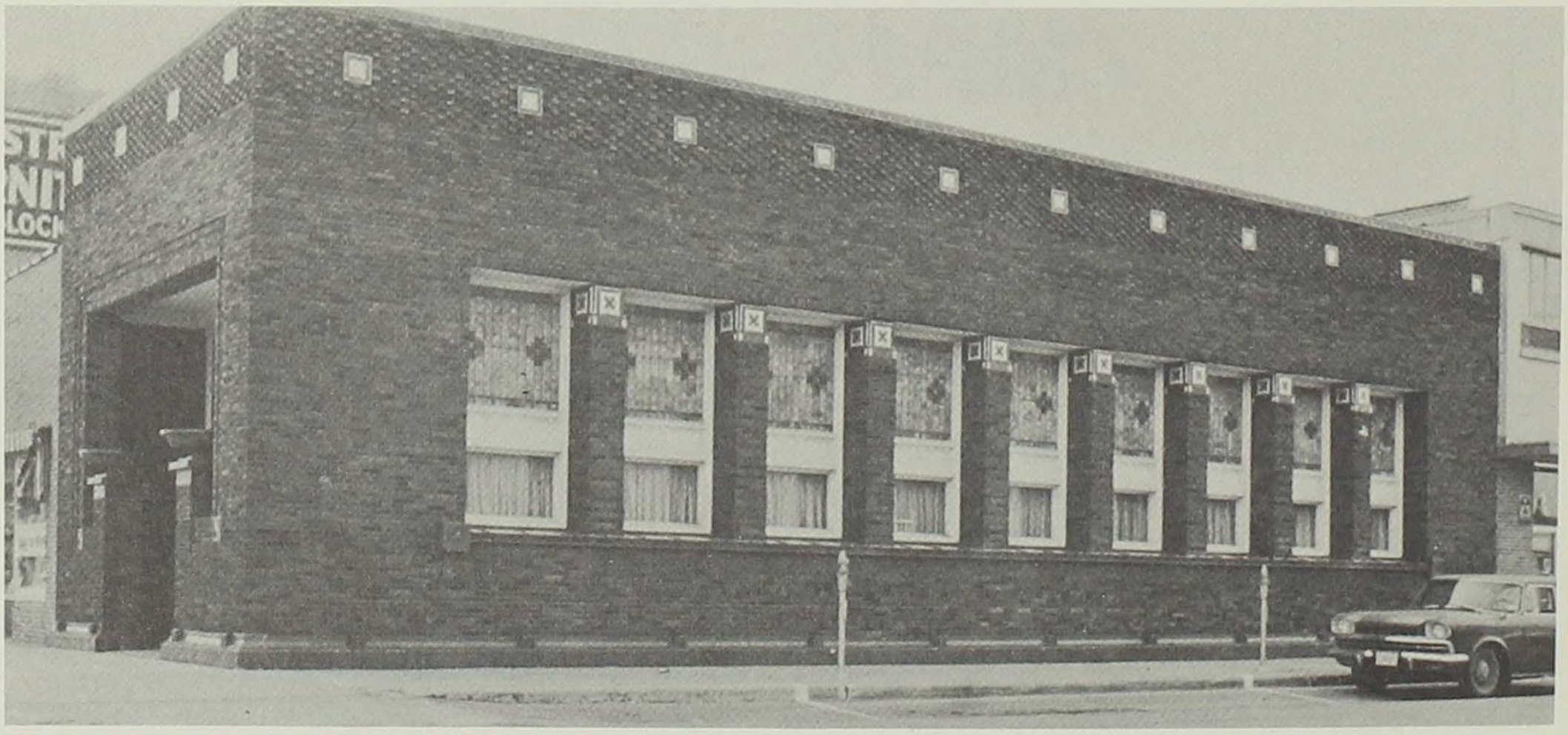
Changing public tastes and the economic depression that befell the nation in the mid-1890s reduced the number of commissions offered to Adler and Sullivan. By 1895, declining income forced the architects to dissolve their partnership. Henceforth Sullivan worked under considerable hardship. Without Adler's considerable *savoir faire* in public relations, the irascible designer found it increasingly difficult to attract and hold clients, most of whom he viewed as vulgar philistines. Between 1900 and his death in 1924, Sullivan won only twenty commissions. Nearly all were in small cities and towns away from his Chicago home; five were in Iowa. Sullivan's buildings still stand in Cedar Rapids, Clinton, Grinnell, and Algona, although some have undergone alteration. Architects consider them among his most interesting work, for each of the buildings represents Sullivan's continuing search for a distinctive American design that did not rely on past cultures or outworn values.

Gerald Mansheim's photographs survey the Sullivan legacy in Iowa.—WS



(courtesy Division of Historic Preservation)

The Henry C. Adams Building in Algona (below) is a simple rectangular block. Subtle variations in the pattern of bricks, terra cotta panels and mouldings, and leaded glass windows (above left) enhance the structure's sturdy exterior. Completed in 1913, the building served as a realtor's office for many years and now houses Leuthold-Williams Clothiers. In the early 1970s, the owners engaged Des Moines architect William Wagner to install show windows sympathetic to the design of the original entrance (above right).



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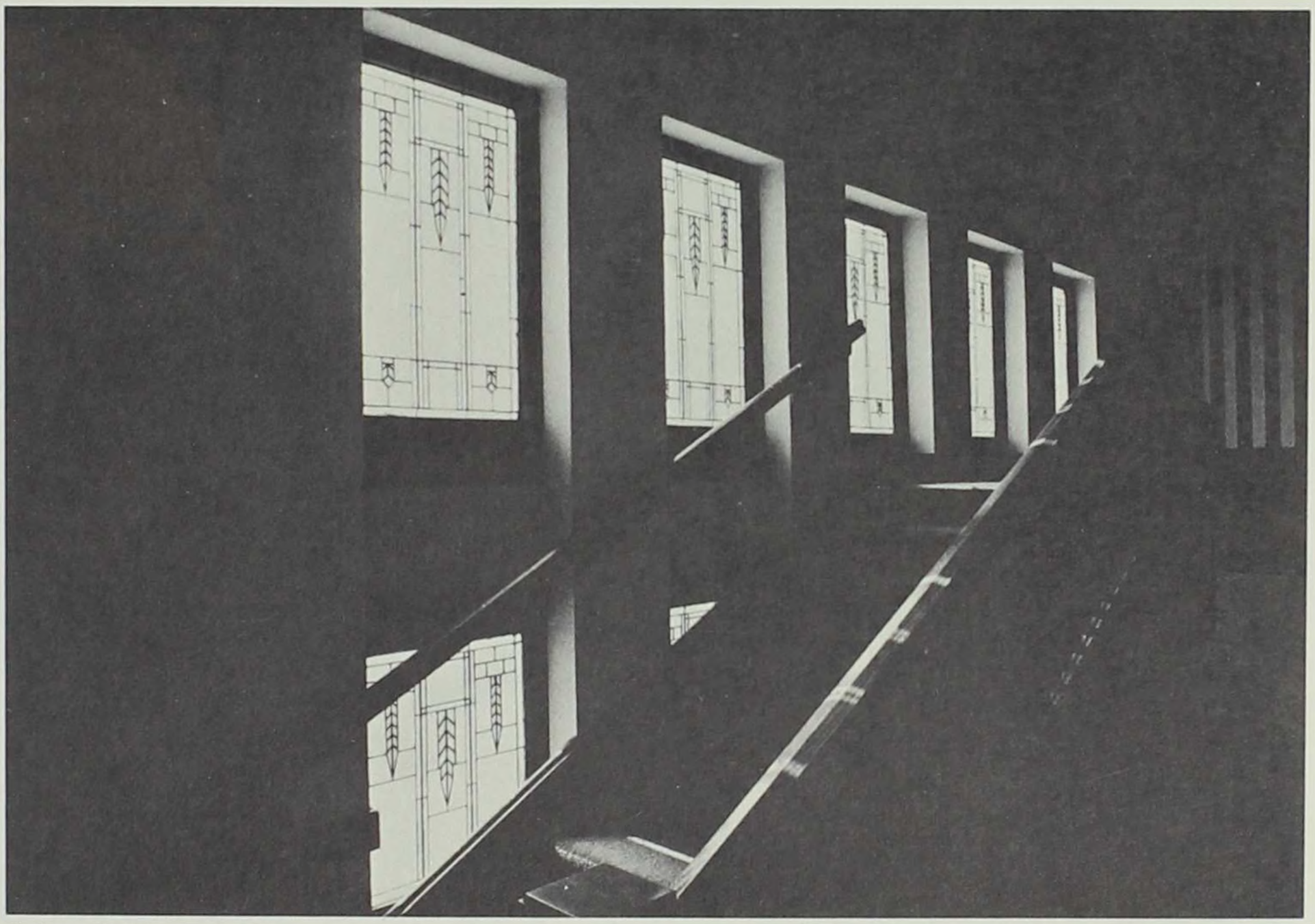
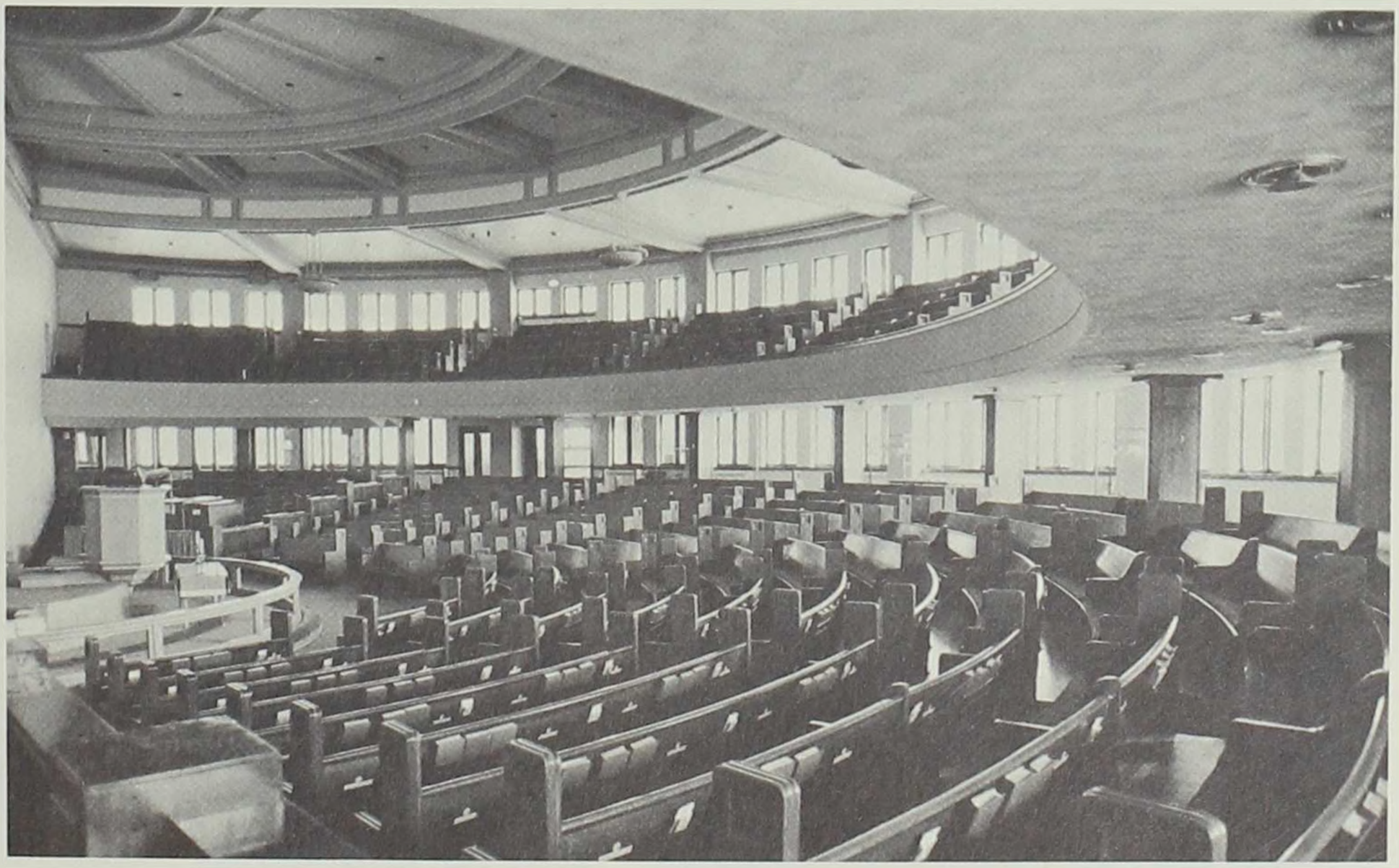
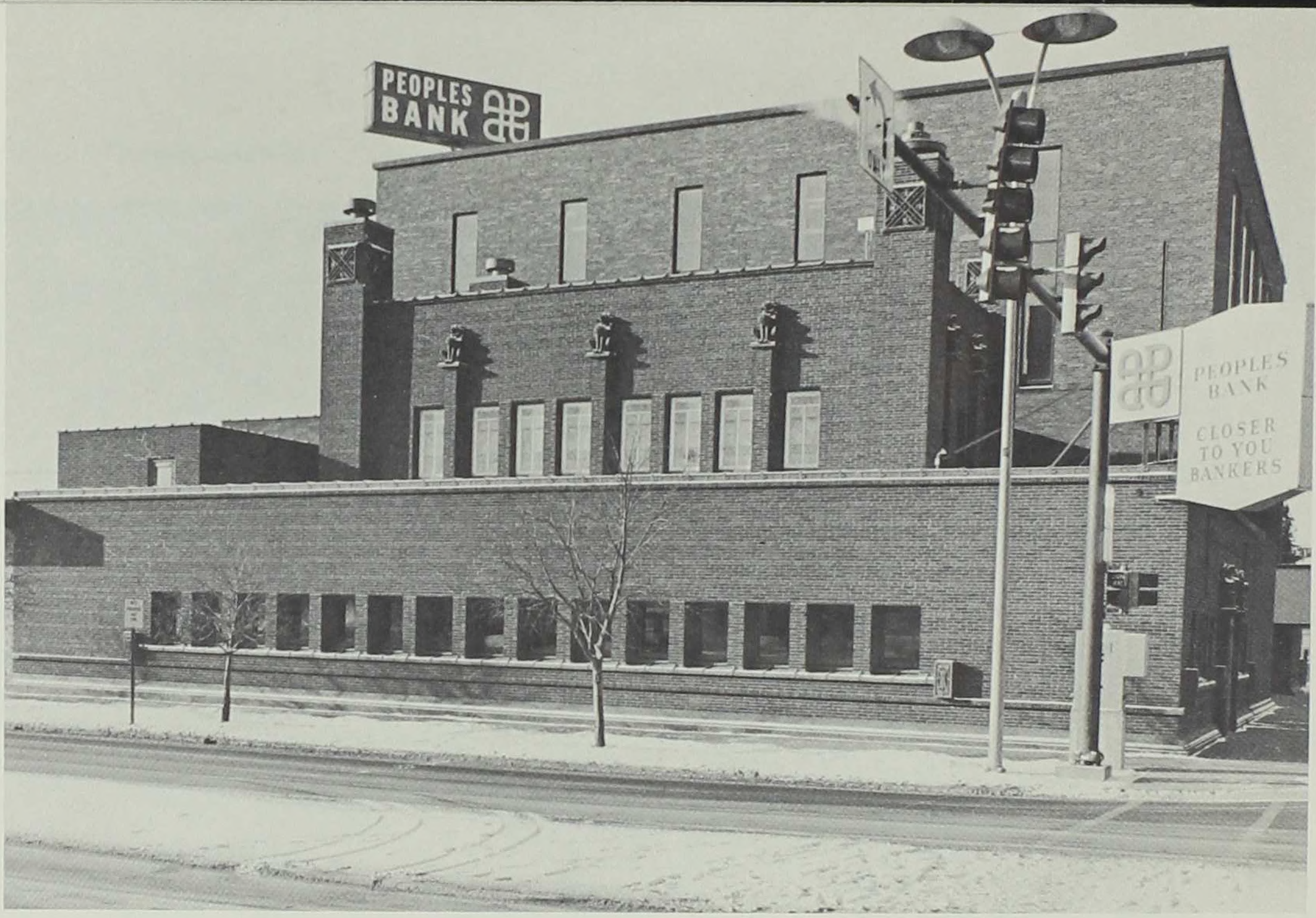


(above) Stained-glass windows at St. Paul's Church in Cedar Rapids; (below) the sanctuary.

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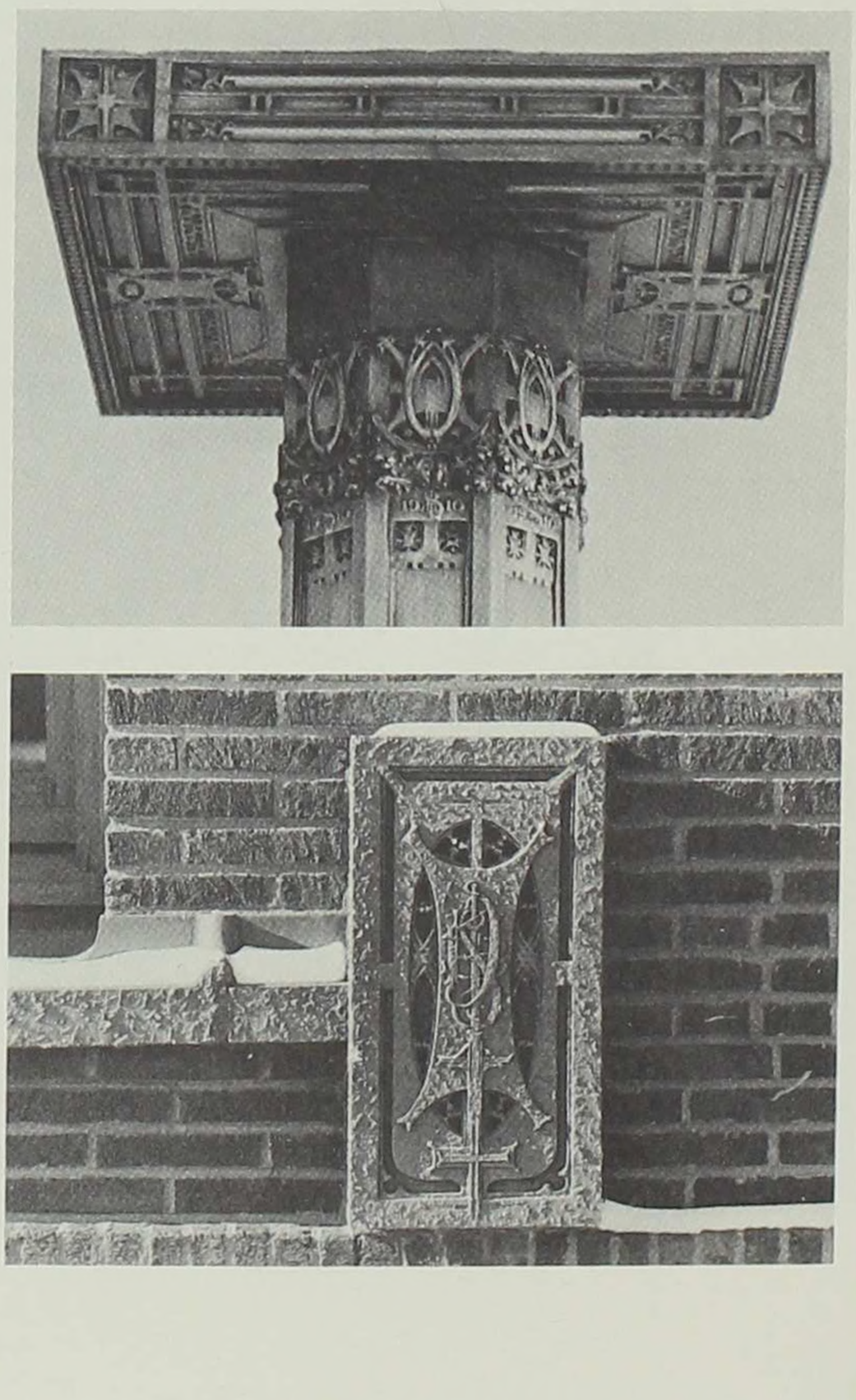
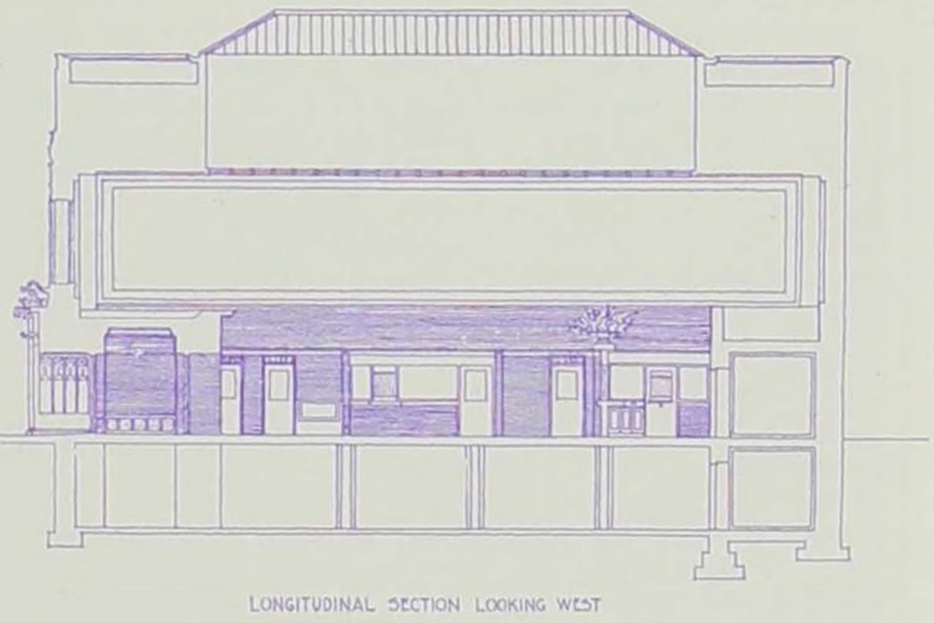


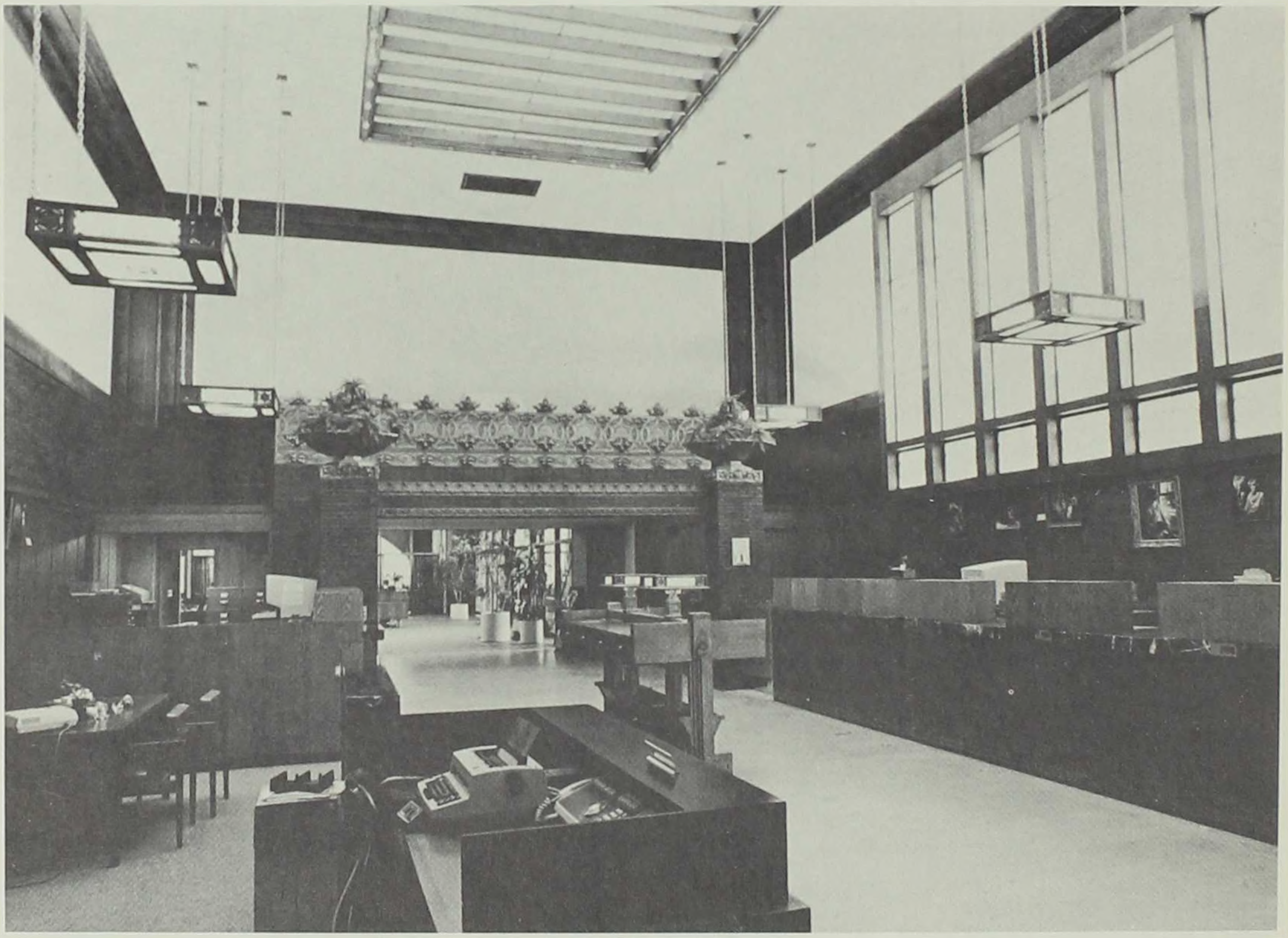
The home of the People's Bank and Trust Company exhibits Sullivan's dictum that form follows function: the original arrangement of a two-story public banking area surrounded by one-story office spaces is readily apparent from outside the building (opposite, top). Ornament gracing the Cedar Rapids bank includes sill stops and carved columns (left) and heraldic lions (far left).

Above, Grinnell's Poweshiek County National Bank Building has been called "Sullivan's Jewel Box." The bank is a solid cubical mass whose walls contain bricks of dark blue, yellow buff, brown, and red. Sullivan sketched the building's essential features on his first visit to Grinnell in 1913. The bank was finished two years later. Below, an architect's drawing reveals the great volume of the building's interior.



LONGITUDINAL SECTION LOOKING WEST

(*from* The Western Architect, *1916*)



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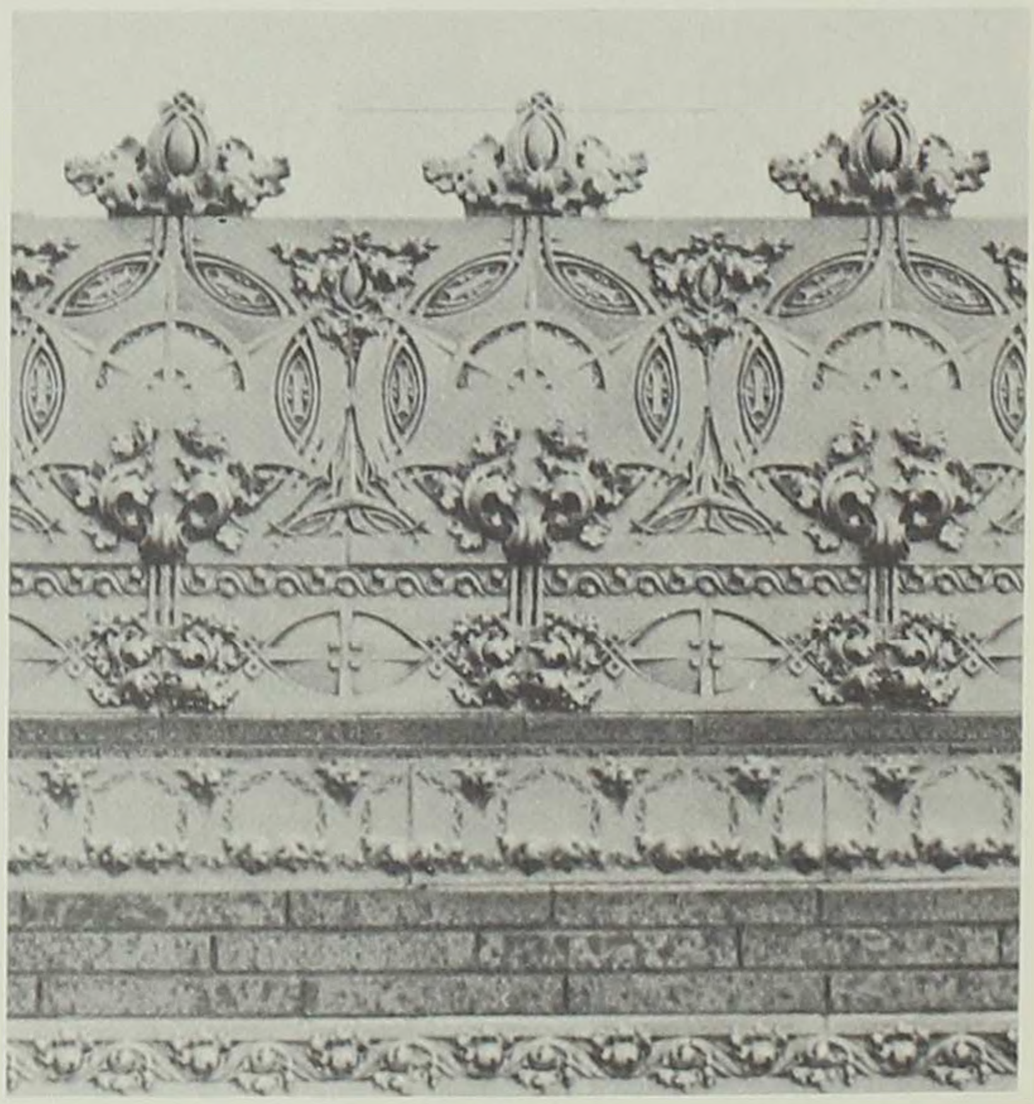
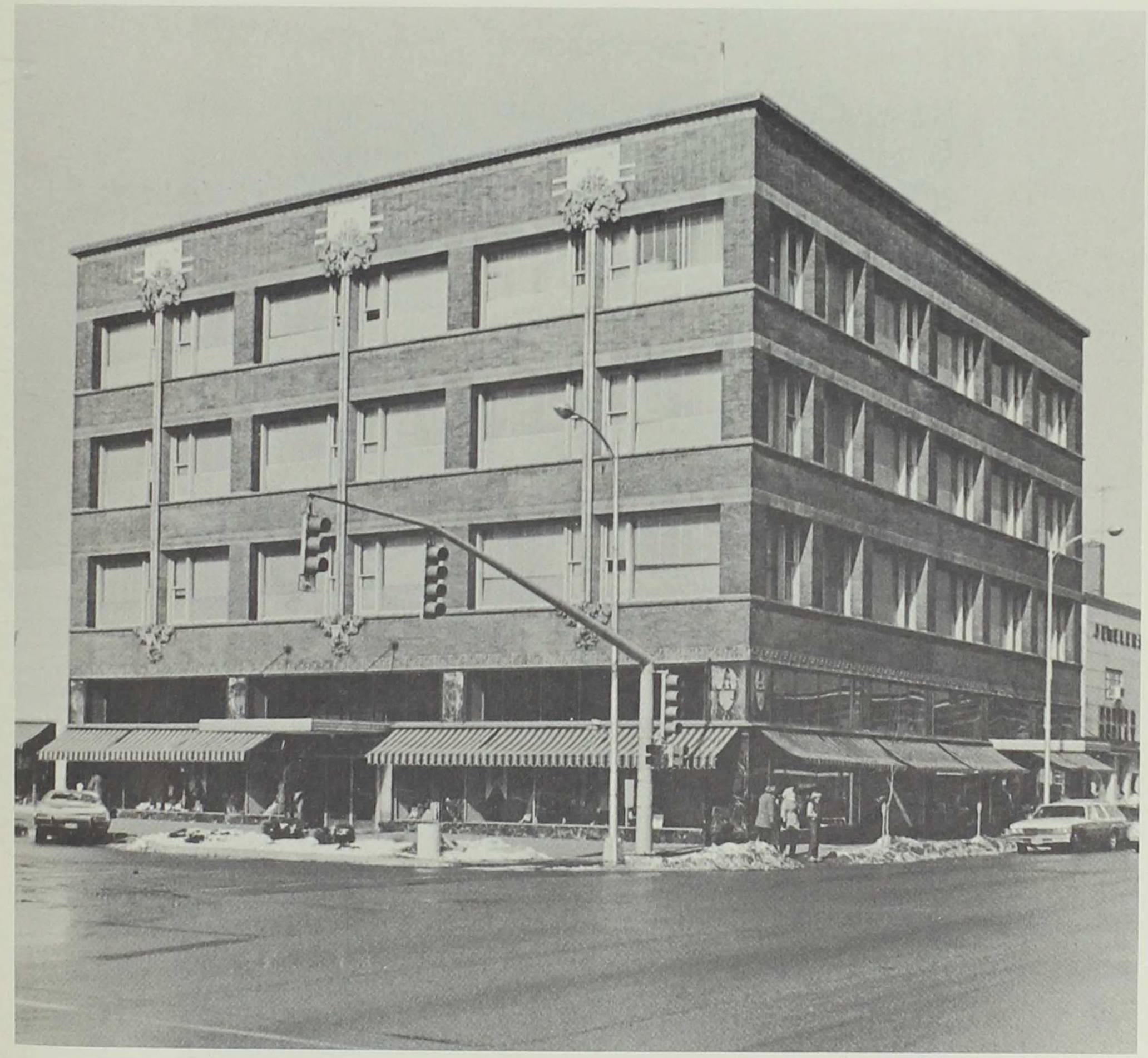
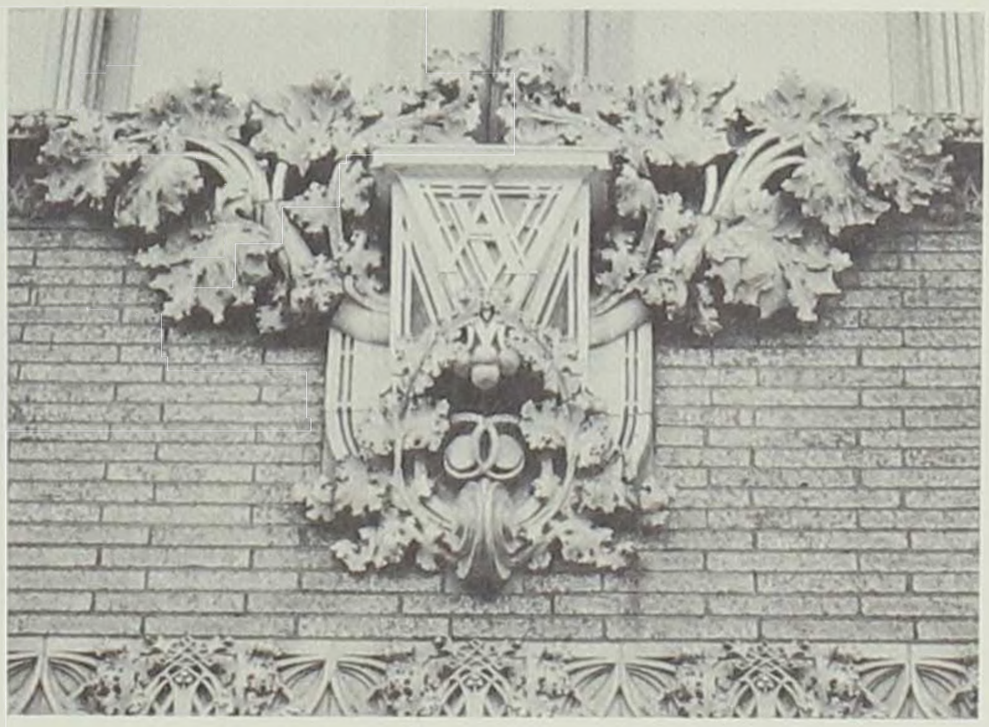
For their help in gathering information on Sullivan's work in Iowa, the editor wishes to thank architect Phil Fedderson of Clinton; Max A. Smith, president of the Poweshiek County National Bank in Grinnell; Mrs. Carol Ridenour at St. Paul's Methodist Church in Cedar Rapids; Elaine A. Ott, James L. West, and Melvin J. McCalley at the People's Savings Bank in Cedar Rapids; and Bill Hasbrouck of Historic Resources in Chicago.

Unless otherwise noted, all photographs are from the collection of the State Historical Society.

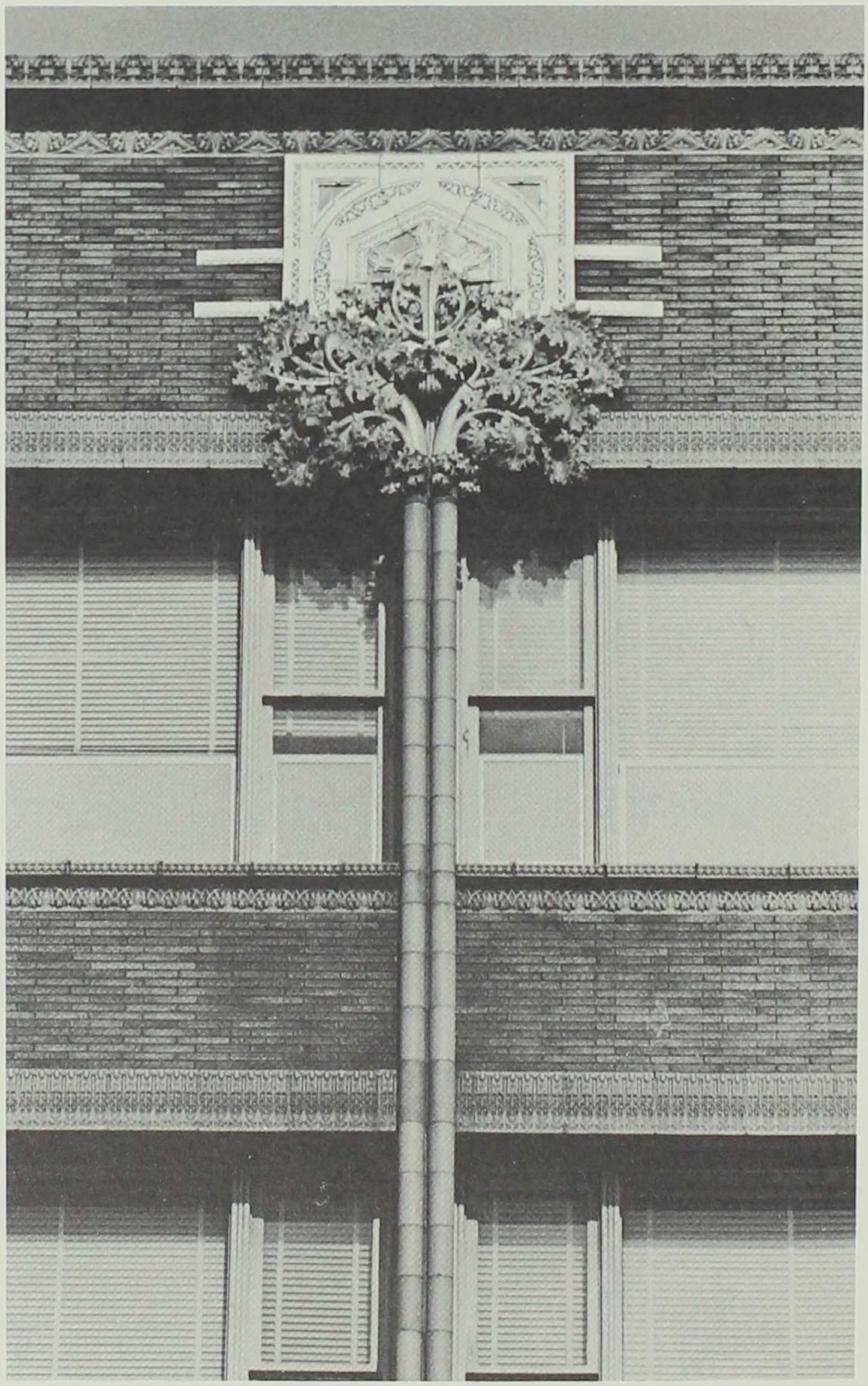






Fixtures (opposite, top) and ornament (left) within the Grinnell bank harmonize with the terra cotta detail of the bank's exterior walls. An addition to the original structure complements Sullivan's design.

Clinton's Van Allen Department Store (above) opened the same year as the Grinnell bank (1915) but shows little similarity to it other than the basic cubical shape. Horizontal bands of "Chicago Bay" windows circle the four-story building, whose facade carries terra cotta mullions rising from carved monograms above the street-level show windows (right).



The Van Allen Department Store's terra cotta mullions burst into vivid green foliations four stories above the sidewalk in downtown Clinton.

CONTRIBUTORS

A native of Sioux City, MARY BENNETT received a Bachelor of Arts in American History from the University of Iowa in 1976. She has worked with the State Historical Society's photograph collection for the last five years. Ms. Bennett has just been awarded an NEH Youthgrant to prepare a book of historical photographs of Iowa.

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The State Historical Society encourages submission of articles on the history of Iowa and the surrounding region that may be of interest to the general reading public. The originality and significance of an article, as well as the quality of an author's research and writing, will determine acceptance for publication. A brief biographical sketch should be submitted. All manuscripts must be double-spaced on medium weight paper. Ordinarily, the text of an article should not exceed 25 to 30 pages. As far as possible, citations should be worked into the body of the text. In this and other matters of form THE MLA STYLE SHEET is the standard guide. Black and white and colored illustrations are an integral part of THE PALIMPSEST. Any photographic illustrations should accompany the manuscript, preferably 5-by-7 or 8-by-10 glossy prints (unmarked on either side) or color slides. Send inquiries to: Editor, Division of the State Historical Society, 402 Iowa Avenue, Iowa City, Iowa 52240.

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